Other Realms

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Issue 18

THE KNIGHT WIVES

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EDITORIAL: SUMMER OF MERP

Well, summer is here and I'm already up to my ears in MERP projects; and somehow, through all the chaos, Other Hands continues. In fact, this journal is swiftly approaching it's FIFTH anniversary. Now that's something that calls for a celebration, and we are already beginning to lay plans for a January '98 issue (#20) of truly epic proportions.

My current goal is to publish (in this and the next issue) all of the remaining submissions which I have been accumulating over the past year, and to begin considering "bids" from writers who would like to have their work appear in the anniversary issue. Ideally, I will be looking for an exemplary assortment of the many different kinds of material we have over the past half decade brought into print: a scholarly essay, an adventure scenario, a game mechanics idea, etc. So if you want to reserve a place for your contribution, please contact me as soon as possible. (I am going to be plodding through the jungles of the Far South with Captain Rastarin this December, which means that all of the submissions for Issue 20 must be edited and ready for text-setting by the end of November.)

You have, of course, noticed that OH has undergone a few changes this issue— like having full-blown cover art. I'd be interested to hear whether people prefer this more art-intensive format. (We're hoping on producing a color cover for the anniversary issue.) And, as always, if you have any suggestions about how to make OH better, by all means let's hear them.

On to the intros for this issue. Jason Vester starts us off with a rather substantial background and stat piece for an order of Gondorian "shield-maidens" (some of which will probably be making its way into the Northern Gondor modules, whenever they get written). Jason is supposed to be authoring a MERP sourcebook on the Nine Nazgûl. Hopefully his present contribution will get his Tolkienian mojo pumping again.

Next up we are proud to present yet another fine background/research essay by Bernie Roessler (who by now must be contending for first place as our most frequent contributor). The topic for this month is how to handle horses and ponies realistically in a MERP game. Very useful stuff.

Following on the tailcoats of last issue we get the first installment of a dramatic summary of a MERP campaign set in T.A. 1640 (some elements of which were meant to play-test ideas for the forthcoming Paths of the Dead and Northern Gondor modules). The narrator, Bridget Buxton (alias the Dread Pirate Rastarin of Kin-strife fame), is also one of our new artists for OH, and her "Captain's Log" will hopefully

FINE PRINT

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's -world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word. Other Hands aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role-playing communitiy. Within the pages of Other Hands, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including Rolemaster and Middle-earth Roleplaying). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen pring in Iron Crown's modules. Other Hands provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: inside the USA — 1 issue $3/4 issues $12; outside the USA — airmail, 1 issue $3.50/4 issues $18. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213 Novato, CA 94948, USA No Eurochecks, please!

Submissions are welcome in any from (preferably legible), but we prefer if you can to send a file. We use Word for Windows. If there is any question as to the readibility of you file, please save it in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 [USA]. Please write me or call if you have any difficulties. My phone number is [415] 892-9066. Please note also that I may be reached on-line at: **chris1224@aol.com**

be adding a much-needed dose of humor to this and future issues.

Finally, we continue to offer all our regular features (sans "Communications," as nobody has written me of late). Fredrik Ekman, our computerist extrordinaire, has brought us an engaging interview with Philip Mitchell, author of many Tolkien-related computer games. (Lately I've been thinking— I know, it's a bad habit—that it would be neat to find someone to start up a new regular column in OH devoted to the Middle-earth card games, especially as more and more bridges are being built between those products and MERP. Any volunteers?)

Oh yes; I almost forgot to tell you the best news of all: OH finally has an active web-page on the Net. Hopefully this will help spread the word and pull in new subscribers. You can check it out at http://squid.ucsb.edu/~jhgowen/Tolkien/ OtherHands.html (Thanks a million, James.)

So, without further adieu, your humble patience pray, gently to hear, kindly to judge....OUR PLAY!!!!

Chris Seeman
July 30, 1997

COMMUNICATIONS

I am writing to tell you that I am rather displeased. VERY displeased.

It has come to my attention time and time again that the dead have received extremely poor press, from day one, in this whole gaming system. The only times that I have seen any sort of useful dead-figure (at all) has been some sort of sad pathetic wandering spirit who needs guidance from the group. The traditional, "Oh help! I am dead and can't help myself! Woe, woe!" Well I tell you that I am sick of it! I am not sure who keeps wandering into these little pathetic has been specters, but let me tell you, they don't speak for most of us. Sure there is the occasional spiritual bleeding heart that seems to grab everyone's attention, but what about the rest of us? What about all those just trying to make a day to day existence?

What ICE needs is a good solid source book for the REAL undead. That's right folks, we need to know how the others, well, live. Sort of. The folks that keep our societies functional, all the masterful members that taught us what we know, and DIDN'T go into the great beyond. Where are they now? What are they doing? But do we get any sort of background. Nope, not a peep.

Until that time, I feel that we will be subject to a great disservice as the gaming community in general. Personally, I am tired of these old fashioned myths being perpetuated to each new generation of bright eyed dice-rollers. I know that I am not alone in this matter. We should stand up and voice our opinion for more expansive source books!

In conclusion I must say that I think things have progressed to a point that has warranted this topic. Too many modules pull us all over the map; in different directions. One source for one dead people.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY ADDENDUM

Rob Bielby *"Arnor: The People* a Middle-earth Role Playing module from I.C.E." *Amon Hen* 145 (May 1997) pp. 19-20

Nancy Martsch "Review of *Arnor: The Land" Beyond Bree* (June 1997) p. 8

La Tierra Media circa 1695 SE: La Guerra de los Anillos de Poder (Comisión de Rol de la STE Smial de Edhellond: Valencia, 1996?) [14 page PBM scenario]

Entre las Sombras del Bosque Negro

(Comisión de Rol de la STE Smial de Edhellond: Valencia, 1996) [24 page PBM scenario]

"Reglas para Combates Cuerpo a Cuerpo sobre Tablero Hexagonado" Estel 16: 29-33

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NEXT ISSUE

"Middle-earth Role Playing and Hârnmaster"

Middle-earth Role Playing

- *The Northern Waste* (realm module) is now available! 192 pgs ($28.00)
- *Lord of theRings PosterMap* (northwestern Middle-earth) is now available! 2' x 3' ($12.00)
- *Hands of the Healer* (profession sourcebook) is now in production at ICE and is slated for a late August release. This book features background info, development stats and special powers for healers from 44 of Middle-earth's cultures and a massive compendium detailing nearly 300 herbs, curatives and poisons, c. 144 pgs ($18.00).
- *The Grey Havens* (citadel module) is undergoing revision by the author and should be ready for editing by early August.
- *The Inland Sea* (realm module) is being written and should be ready for editing by mid-August.
- *Near Harad* (realm module) is being written and should be ready for editing by late 1997.
- *Paths of the Dead* (citadel module) is being written and should be ready for editing by late 1997.

Lord of the Rings Adventure Game

- *Before the Goblins* (adventure supplement #3) is being written (no release date slated).
- *Greatest of the Forests* (adventure supplement #4) is being written (no release date slated).

Middle-earth Collectible Card Game

- *The Lidless Eye* (card game expansion) is now available!
- *Middle-earth: The Wizards Casual Companion* (beginner's reference book w/pre-tuned decks) is now available! 48 pgs ($8.00)
- *Lidless Eye Companion* (reference book w/scenarios) is slated for release this month.
- *MECCG Gift Set* (assortment of cards + paraphernalia) is slated for release this month.
- *Against the Shadow* (card game expansion) is in production and is slated for a November release.
- *Elrond's House* (a crossover product designed to get CCG players interested in MERP) is being play-tested (no release date slated).

Other

- *Middle-earth Puzzles* (the old-fashioned kind) using original art and art from MECCG are slated for release in October or November.

Digital Hands

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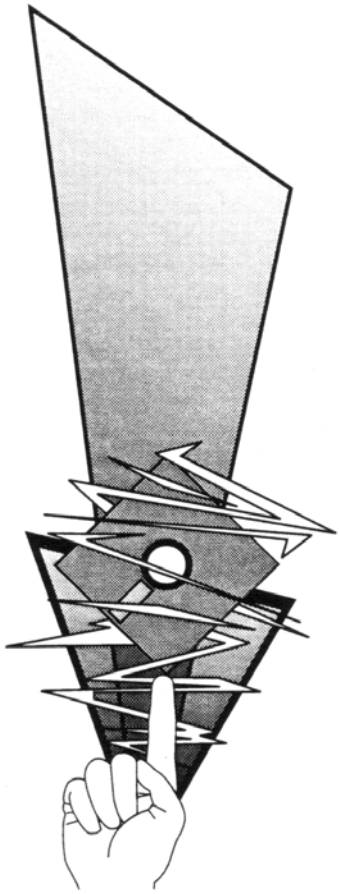
An Interview with Philip Mitchell

During the eighties, a series of games called The Tolkien Software Adventure Series was written by a team at Beam Software supervised by Philip Mitchell. The titles of the games in the series are The Hobbit, The Fellowship of the Ring Software Adventure *(published in Europe under the title* Lord of the Rings: Game One*)*, Shadows of Mordor



and Crack of Doom. *They were published by Melbourne house in Europe and Addison- Wesley in North America.*

The Hobbit *in particular was in many ways revolutionary for its time and came to be one of the most important sources of inspiration for text adventures in Europe during the eighties, although today it tends to be mostly remembered for its many annoying bugs. Here follows an interview with Philip Mitchell.*

Fredrik Ekman [FE]: How did Beam Software get the license to produce these games?

Philip Mitchell [PM]: Melbourne House negotiated the licenses for Tolkien's works in 1981. When the Melbourne House name was sold the rights were transferred to Beam Software (same company different name). This was about 1986 I think.

FE: What exactly was the relationship between Melbourne House and Beam Software?

PM: Beam was a subsidiary of Melbourne House. MH was the publishing company, Beam was the development studio. When MH was eventually sold so we could concentrate on development, Beam became an independent group. Funnily enough part of the group is now Laser Beam, a publishing company.

FE: Tolkien Enterprises (which is totally independent from The Tolkien Estate) owns the rights to role playing games, board games, card games — every imaginable kind of game based on Middle-earth except computer games. Could you explain to me why this is so?

PM: Computer game rights are a relatively new thing. When we negotiated the rights, computer games were seen as a very risky business and the traditional game producers (who had the rights to the board games, card games, etc.) were not interested in taking the risk. The Tolkien Estate were happy to sign up this chancy new area to someone who had a prototype product and knew what they were doing. I bet there are a lot of people today who wished they had taken a gamble back then on the computer games industry!

FE: Why was *The Hobbit* the choice for the first game, rather than *The Lord of the Rings?*

PM: I don't really remember why, although as it turned out it was by far the better choice. I think part of it was that it was a complete story in one book and more manageable than the entire *Lord of the Rings* story.

FE: In *The Hobbit,* both you and Veronika Megler are credited, but in most subsequent articles and reviews, only you are mentioned. What did each of you actually do in the development?

PM: Veronika and I started at Melbourne house at the same time (we where friends at uni and both responded to an advertisement for programmers). That was in 1981, and we worked part time while finishing our degrees. At the end of 1981 she left to work for IBM while I stayed on and completed the game.

FE: How come you and Veronika of all people were chosen to make the game?

PM: We were in the right place at the right time. Alfred Milgrom (company founder and director) wanted to make a better adventure game than was currenuy available. He advertised for programmers, we replied and got the job. The rest is history.

FE: *The Hobbit* was first written for the Spectrum[1] then converted to a variety of different formats. With what versions were you personally involved?

PM: Actually it was first written for the Tandy TRS-80 but never released. The Spectrum appeared at an opportune moment for us — right processor (since all the code was written at that stage for the Z80), color, cheap etc. After the Spectrum I was involved to some degree with all of the other versions. I supervised all of the other versions and wrote and converted code on the Amstrad, Oric-1, PC, Apple II and Macintosh versions. In case you wereinterested there was also (briefly) an Amiga version that was never released. In fact the Macintosh version was written on an Amiga 1000.

FE: Two versions of the game were released for the Spectrum: 1.1 and 1.2. Was version 1.0 the TRS-80 version, or was there another, unreleased, ZX Spectrum version?

PM: Version 1.1 was the first released Spectrum version, 1.2 was a patched update with some bug fixes. There was never

a version 1.0. At the time we felt that version 1.0 of anything was synonymous with unpolished pre-release software so we went straight to 1.1 to make it look better. Ah the vanity of youth.

FE: The parser[2] of *The Hobbit* was, I would say, nothing short of revolutionary for a Spectrum game of its time, and is probably one of the most important features that have since given the game its cult status. What made you decide to put so much effort into it, rather than just make a simple two-word parser which was common at the time?

PM: There were three basic aspects of adventure games at the time that we felt needed improving and that, if implemented properly, would give us a competitive edge. The first was the game database size, by comparison to its predecessors, *The Hobbit* was a very large adventure game, we developed some really neat text storage systems to cram as much into the game as we possibly could. The second thing was the parser (which as you said is what the game is most remembered for). Our aim was to bring a bit more life to the game by allowing the user to interact more freely with it. The third thing we set out to do was to create a sense that the world in the game contained autonomous, intelligent creatures that you could interact with. Admittedly, Gandalf and Thorin were pretty stupid; but compared to anything else around it was a major leap forward. I still think this is an area that needs more attention in today's games. Myst, 7th Guest and Zork Nemesis (to name a few) are great games; but their worlds feel so empty. The graphics were an extra that only really got added when the Spectrum arrived, although we had tinkered with graphics on the TRS-80 version.

FE: Were there any parts of the games that you were particularly satisfied with?

PM: All up. *The Hobbit* is still the game that I have the fondest memories of working on. We were at the beginning of the personal computer era, on the brink of perhaps the greatest technological revolution to date, and it was pretty exciting. Things changed so fast. It was like a continuous roller coaster ride.

FE: Compared with *The Hobbit,* the other games in the series feel less successful and far more removed from Tolkien's original. Why do you think this is so?

PM: Actually, 1 agree with your comments We never quite managed to continue the success we had with *The Hobbit* through the Lord of the Rings series. In hindsight, I think that *Lord of the Rings* was not as well suited to the style of game we were doing then as The Hobbit was—at least we had a great deal more trouble coming up with an adventure game based on the stories. Don't get me wrong, I'm not criticizing the books — I love them all, but the adventure game just seemed to flow out of *The Hobbit.*

FE: How do you feel looking back at those games today?

PM: It's a bit like looking at high school photos. You shudder when you think of some of the things you did, but basically the memories are good and I am proud to have been a part of it.

FE: What other computer games and computer game authors influenced you when you wrote the games?

PM: At the time I was heavily into the original Crowther and Woods adventure game on the VAX system at Uni. I also played a game in the VAX called *Dungeon,* which was later to resurface as the Zork series of games. Scott Adams' adventures on the TRS-80 were also big favorites. I have always preferred puzzle and logic games to shoot-em-ups, probably because I'm not very good at arcade games.

FE: Did you ever play any role playing games (the traditional paper-and-dice variety)?

PM: A couple of times; but I never really got into it.

FE: Exactly how well did the games sell? I suspect that *The Hobbit* sold much better than the later games. Is this correct?

PM: I don't have any detailed regional sales figures; though I can tell you that, across all platforms, *The Hobbit* sold in excess of a million units world wide and the Lord of the Rings games did about half that combined. At the height of the Spectrum and C64 versions I was getting about 50-60 letters a day from fans and people who were stuck and needed help.

FE: Does Beam Software have plans for producing any more games based on the books in the future?

PM: At this stage nothing is planned.

FE: What are you working on right now?

PM: Mostly technical project management (i.e., organizing the programming team on multiple projects and sorting out the problems to keep things running). I still do a fair amount of programming, *The Dame was Loaded* (published by Philips) has just been released in the U.S. and should be out in Europe soon. I helped code the Macintosh port and am doing the CDi version. *Full Court Press* (published by Microsoft) will be out soon (received a top ten award at E3).

FE: Thank you very much for your time and your effort.

INTERNET REFERENCES (WITH DOWNLOAD VERSIONS FOR EMULATORS):

http://www.Lysator.iiu.se/tolkien-gaines/entry/hobbit.html

http://www.Lysator.Liu.se/tolkien-games/entry/Lotr-gameone.html

http://www.Lysator.Liu.se/tolkien-gaineii/entry/som.html

http://www.lysator.Liu.se/tolkien-games/entry/crackofdoom. html

FOOTNOTES:

1. Sinclair ZX Spectrum was one of the most popular home computers in Europe during the eighties. In the US, it was released under the name Timex Sinclair 2068, but never became popular.
2. The parser is the part of a text adventure which interprets the player's input. In a simple game this would only handle something like *open door* while a game like *The Hobbit* understands *take the key and unlock the door with it*.

The Knight Wives of Calenardhon

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A couple of things bothered me. First, the opportunities for heroic warriors in Middle-earth were almost exclusively male. During the War of the Ring, a woman who wanted to wade through an Orc-horde could at least choose the route of the shieldmaiden, but in a mid-Third Age setting even this is unclear, and the Northman tribes are simply not as appealing as the later Rohirrim would be. Why should the two great kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor both be without outlet for the occasional female fighter?

Second, the Hornburg, which is so well documented in The Lord of the Rings, *is undeveloped for ICE's 1640 setting. This seemed like a terrible shame.*

Here, I have put two and two together. This is a work in progress, and it is my hope to see its refined inclusion in the forthcoming Northern Gondor *modules. My thanks to Chris Seeman, who served as a sounding board and historical reference checker while these concepts congealed. Another nod of the head to the Oxford English Dictionary, in which the definition "Knight-wife—a female knight or warrior" first caught my attention. Finally, I must acknowledge "Bodicea's Daughters," an order of warrior women in the Pendragon game, which served as further inspiration.*

ORIGINS

The Knight-wives had their origin in one of Gondor's most terrible tragedies—the Kin-strife. In 1437 Osgiliath fell to the Usurper, and with it fell the flower of Gondorian nobility. Among the casualties was Hendiril, a nobleman and famous companion to Ornendil. His wife, Glorfinniel, was imprisoned in Osgiliath along with the rest of Castamir's political enemies.

Over the next few years, Glorfinniel became the center of a resistance movement comprised of the widows and daughters of Dúnedain slain by the Usurper. This group, which came to be called the "Knight-wives" by their supporters within the prison city, organized rebellion within the old ward of Wilwarin, which was occupied predominantly by displaced refugees from Calenardhon. When Eldacar's army returned with a chance for liberation, the population of Osgiliath rose up against the garrison forces; the Knight-wives orchestrated and led the assault on the Eastern Fort. Glorfinniel slew the lieutenant of that garrison in personal combat.

Although Osgiliath was liberated, Eldacar still had much to do, and so did the Knight-wives. Leaving their birthplace behind, the small band of women wore arms and armor in Eldacar's army of reconquest, eventually coming to the king's attention. He briefly attached them to his personal guard after a foiled assassination attempt, where they made a profound impression on Eldacar's Northman allies. In the final battle with Castamir, the Knight-wives fought in the front ranks of Eldacar's center.

AGLAROND AND HARNOST

When the war was over and the king restored, Glorfinniel petitioned to return to her home at Osgiliath and begin rebuilding there, but Eldacar had other ideas. Calenardhon, too, had risen in revolt during Castamir's weakness, and most of Eldacar's formerly chosen captains there had died in battle or in the purges of the Usurper. To make matters worse, Castamir's foreign mercenaries had settled in Cardolan in large numbers, and preyed viciously upon the Enedhwaith. Restoring order there was critical for the returning king. He therefore asked Glorfinniel to go to Calenardhon and take command of the fortress at Aglarond, which at that time was known as Harnost. If she would do this, Eldacar offered to grant Glorfinniel the rank of captain, to make the Knight-wives a part of the Gondorian army, and support them out of the royal treasury as the garrison of Aglarond for so long as they served the king's will.

Perhaps it was the lure of this new challenge, a desire to leave behind the devastation of her previous life in Osgiliath, or simply the lure of armed political might, but Glorfinniel agreed. She led thirty of her followers to Aglarond in 1448 and took formal control of Harnost from the temporary custodians that had ousted Finlong, Castamir's local appointed stooge. Thanks to her work with the Calenardhon deportees in Osgiliath, Glorfinniel's reputation proceeded her and she was hailed as a hero.

In her efforts to forge a professional military unit out of thirty embittered and embattled women, Glorfinniel encountered the expected difficulties. She sent for aid from the king, and received in reply one Sergeant Pethorn, a vocal misogynist but the best trainer in the south kingdom. For six months he drilled the women into the ground, showing no mercy nor pity, and by the end of that time the Knight-wives were the equal in discipline of any company in Gondor. Pethorn remained in Aglarond for another year while he trained a successor, then he fled to the normality of Minas Anor.

The Knight-wives grew into a company of professional fighting women, organized along traditional Gondorian lines. They were numbered among the King's Corps, and their upkeep was paid by the Crown, not the governor of Calenardhon. The Knight-wives were, if not famous, at least well enough known to attract applicants from throughout Gondor, young women of Dúnadan descent, escorted to Harnost by their fathers or brothers. Quality was routinely very high within the Wives — women who were too frail, timid or undisciplined to fit in were sent home or directed towards less martial trades. Occasionally notable women who were not of Gondorian descent nonetheless found a home among the Wives.

Due to the strategic importance of Aglarond, Glorfinniel and the Knight-wives did not answer to the provincial governor of Calenardhon, but rather directly to the king, through the intermediary of the Steward of Orthanc (who had access to a palantír and thus the luxury of instant communication with the Crown). The company's greatest obligation — besides the maintenance of Harnost itself—was the policing of the road to Tharbad. Despite the unusual nature of the company, the Wives generally avoided criticism, thanks to their close relationship to the king, the obvious responsibility with which they had been entrusted and the uniformly high caliber of their membership.

THE STONE MAIDEN AND THE GROWTH OF THE COMPANY

The death of Glorfinniel in 1470 found the Wives in their first major crisis, for there was no clear successor to the captain of the company. Captain Edheliel, the popular candidate, was nonetheless unsure of her ability to follow in the footsteps of her predecessor, and intended to decline the new office. Tortured by indecision and the pressure of her comrades, Edheliel announced her intention to stand a vigil in seclusion within the Glittering Caves. It was in that night of isolation, surrounded by wonders, that Edheliel discovered the Stone Maiden.

To this day the true nature of the Maiden remains unknown to the Wise, but it is apparent that she was a Maia of some sort, perhaps imprisoned or in voluntary retreat from the concerns of the world. It is unclear whether the Stone Maiden was freed by Edheliel that night, or whether the plight of the Wives sufficiently moved the

spirit that she chose entangle herself in the affairs of mortals. Whatever the case, Edheliel emerged from the caves a changed woman — exhibiting an enlightened spirit that was quite evident to all who knew her. She offered to take command of the company, and to further strengthen it through ties with the ancient power that had so transformed her. Under her leadership, the bodies of Glorfinniel and the rest of the company's dead were interred within the caves, where the Stone Maiden watched over them. The Glittering Caves served as the burial place for the Wives from then on, and it is believed that they rest there still.

Edheliel's leadership greatly transformed the Knight-wives, renewing their self-imposed mandate to protect the Enedhwaith and its people. The Wives labored as tireless guardians, and their fame began to spread. Inspired by their heroism, and the reputed mystic talents of its most enlightened leaders, new recruits flocked in ever-larger numbers to join the company. Many were turned away as unfit for the rigors demanded, but those who remained enabled the Wives to become a real presence in the vast expanses of Enedhwaith, where rapacious mercenaries and murdering brigands were a constant danger to travelers on the Tharbad road. For centuries they were identified as the preeminent representatives of Gondor west of Angrenost.

In the time of the Great Plague, the Knight-wives achieved a sort of golden age. The magic of the Stone Maiden sheltered Aglarond and its environs from the pestilence. Although a few instances of disease were reported, no one sheltered within Harnost or the caves themselves perished. This left the Wives strong and numerous at a time when most of Gondor (including the rest of Calenardhon) was reeling. The Wives sheltered plague-victims within the caves and the citadel itself until the catacombs were full to overflowing, and much of the devastation was averted—at least in this small corner of Calenardhon. Under the guidance of Imraphel, their captain at the time, the Wives continued to keep the roads safe, and even assisted the garrison of Orthanc when the soldiers there succumbed to disease.

THE LAST CHARGE OF THE KNIGHT-WIVES

The Knight-wives endured until the Second Wainrider War. Over the course of five centuries, the Wives had grown into a powerful and wealthy political faction, anxious for social reform in the Gondorian military. Their captain, Thangwen, argued for the acceptance of women throughout the ranks of the King's Corps and Territorial Regiments, and thanks to her vigorous and impassioned speeches, she nearly succeeded. Such a revolution, however, was not to be.

The final hour of the company came during Eärnil's northern confrontation with the Wainriders in Ithilien. His line made brittle by repeated assaults, the cause was nearly lost when a Sagath charge was directed against his weakened center. Captained by Thangwen, the Knight-wives mustered their forces and led a countercharge, buying time for Eärnil to reinforce and strengthen his line. While some of their infantry survived, the Wives themselves all perished—all but one, Nardis, who returned to Calenardhon after the war was over. Nardis would continue to travel that province, telling and retelling the legend of the Wives to all who would hear, until she died in seclusion over fifty years later of age and heartache. Her efforts perpetuated the company's fame, however, and when the Eorlingas settled the Riddermark five centuries later these stories were still told. The ancient legends of Eldacar's bodyguard of refugee-warrioresses helped contribute to the rise of Rohan's shieldmaiden tradition.

After the destruction of the Knight-wives, Eärnil chose new wardens for Aglarond — followers indigenous to the area, of local Daen stock, and the Dúnadan character of the fortress was forever changed. It would remain in steady decline until the arrival of the Rohirrim.

ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING

The Knight-wives began as a single company, or othronas, of combined infantry and all-female cavalry, but their numbers swelled until, by the 16th century, a new organizational structure was required. After that re-organization, the Wives came to be composed of three divisions, or *berenais* (sing, *boronas),* under a single captain, each having grown from a single troop, or díras, of the original muster. Although traditional Gondorian rank structure permitted the leader of each division to be called a *dírgon* (S. "captain"), tradition within the Wives reserved that title for Glorfinniel's chosen successor, whereas the division captains used the term "high captain". Each division consisted of three or four troops, led by a captain. Each troop numbered between 60-100 warriors, divided into 20-man lines, each led by a lieutenant.

The First Division comprised the Wives themselves, warrior women mounted on horse who fought with lance, sword and composite bow. This was always the smallest of the three divisions, only growing to four troops during the height of their power in the mid 17th century and near the end of their history. The Second and Third Divisions were composed of infantry — both male and female —with the Second containing the more veteran troops. These fought with sword, spear and composite bow, and were garbed in chainmail with tall shields.

Men were in the majority within the lower ranks of the infantry, generally numbering about 60% of the common soldiers. They were usually locals who, if they excelled in arms, later went on to join the garrison at Orthanc, or take officer positions with the Territorial Corps. Male officers within the Wives were very, very rare, and even then found only within the infantry.

Typically, maidens desiring membership in the Wives arrived in their young adulthood—when it became clear that the usual life of a pampered noblewoman would not suit them. After a cursory physical inspection the woman was put into the Third Division and began a life of drill, arms training and physical conditioning. When not in training, recruits served guard duty on the walls of Harnost or acted as attendants to the Wives themselves. The Third rarely saw military action except as reserve troops, or in a general call to arms during times of great crisis, such as the Wainrider Wars. Nearly all applicants were initially accepted, but many were rejected or left on their own within the first year.

In time the woman, if she survived, rose to the Second Division, a place of some honor and distinction. The Second patrolled the Tharbad road, acted as personal bodyguards to the Wives, helped to train and supervise the younger recruits, bore messages to the king, escorted merchant

caravans and conducted patrols throughout the Aglarond region. Many women never rose above this rank, and lived out their lives as professional infantry in Aglarond.

The highest rank, however, was the Knight-wives themselves. Requirements to join this elite troop were exceedingly high and unforgiving. At least five years of previous service were expected. Mastery of the longsword, lance and bow were only the first of many talents needed to rise to this rank; the applicant was further assumed to be skilled in leechcraft on the battlefield, to demonstrate profound leadership ability and to be an adept rider. The Wives insisted on strong moral character, determination and a bearing that set a good example for women throughout Gondor. A candidate could only be nominated for full membership in the Wives by two acting members of the division. All of the Wives gave their opinion of the candidate, but the final decision always belonged to the captain. If rejected, the applicant's name could not be resubmitted for a period of three years.

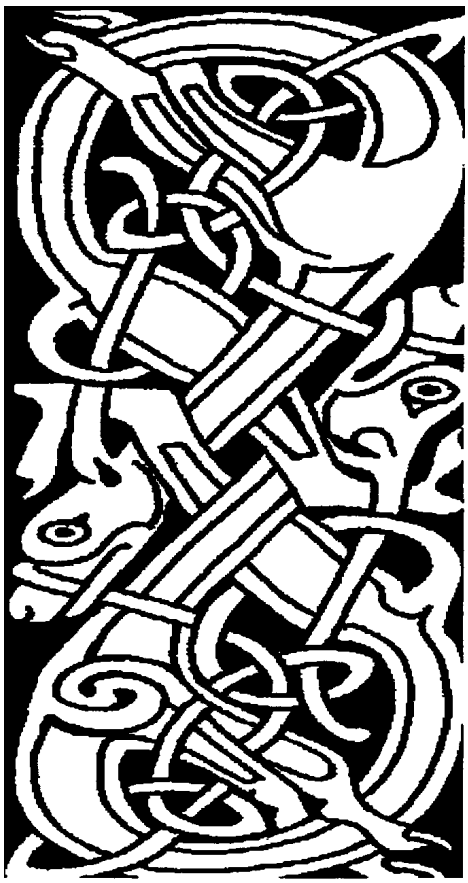
After twenty years of service to the Wives, in any of the divisions, a soldier was entitled to retirement and a modest pension. Most of the older women remained in Aglarond, working as servants, advisors and grooms to the active troops.

Both the high captain and her subordinate dirgonath were chosen from among the Wives proper, with the lieutenants coming from the ranks of the line they commanded. (This was, therefore, the highest rank that any male warrior might attain.) The captain also appointed additional officers with authority over particular areas of activity — these positions varied during the history of the company, but frequently included the Warden of Harnost (who also acted as treasurer), one captain responsible for the road to Tharbad and a high captain to organize security in the westmarch between the rivers Adorn and Angren, a sergeant-major in charge of training and another as standard-bearer, and a final high captain who acted as chief aide to the captain, and served in her stead during illness or other misfortune.

If, at any time, the captain felt that a Knight-wife (including any member of the infantry divisions) had become a shame to her unit, the offender could be stripped of her status and expelled from Aglarond. The dishonor of such an exile was so great that the woman usually could not return to her family, and typically became a bandit or a recluse.

TACTICS

Recognizing that they will never be as physically powerful as their male counterparts, the Knight-wives instead emphasize speed and cunning over raw power. Their typical weapons are very traditional for Gondor — longswords, composite bows, lances and shields. Archery tactics are emphasized more than the Gondorian norm, and the Wives have a habit of wielding hollowed-out wooden lances just a few feet longer than those of their male comrades—an advantage in reach that often takes their opponents by surprise. The women armor themselves in bright coats of glittering chainmail, forsaking heavier plate armor. Most of their equipment is acquired in Osgiliath, and is of very high quality. Medium war-horses are the standard mount—a blend of speed and power. A handful of knight-wives forsake traditional weapons and armor, and go into battle in full or partial plate, or wielding battle axes, morningstars, greatswords or other curiosities. Before any such weapon is permitted, the Wife must be proficient with the standard arms of her division.



PERSONALITIES

GLORFINNIEL

The founder of the Knight-wives became a warrior only under duress. As the wife of Lord Hendiril, Glorfinniel was a Gondorian noblewoman in the classical mold — proud, strong-willed and the product of an excellent education. A natural leader, Glorfinniel was trained in the basics of strategy so that she might organize the defense of the family estates in her husband's absence. These skills were put to good use by her in Osgiliath.when she organized a band of resistance fighters from the widows and daughters of Castamir's victims.

Glorfinniel's band was distinguished from other female resistance groups because of its tactics. Avoiding the usual methods of seduction and espionage, Glorfinniel preferred to arm her companions and strike at her oppressors through ambush and even open battle. Many of her recruits, filled with despair over the death of their loved ones, longed for death themselves. Fatalities among Glorfinniel's warriors were high.

But those that survived earned the profound respect of other loyalists, and Glorfinniel soon found herself in a position of leadership (a role which she welcomed, true to her nature). When the possibility of an armed uprising in the city became a reality with Eldacar's return, Glorfinniel's Knight-wives (for so they had by now come to be called) were one of the few combat-ready bands within the city. Thus, they proved instrumental in the city's uprising, and word of Glorfinniel's valor was brought home by the refugees to Calenardhon, where the Wives would later reside.

For the length of her years as leader of the company, Glorfinniel remained a stoic, enigmatic captain. Few of her companions could claim to truly know her. However, she inspired an almost unreal level of loyalty from her people, thanks to the unquestioned devotion that she herself bore them. Although many Gondorians, unaccustomed to a woman in such a strong social role, accused her of madness or witchcraft, there were no such insults from the people of Calenardhon, who considered her their greatest living hero.

Glorfinniel was named after her long, golden hair, which was the subject of song long before she became a warrioress. She was further possessed of a long, lean, athletic frame that greatly aided her in her new career. Although age eventually weakened her and she lost much of the strength of her youth, Glorfinniel's beauty never faded, and she had many admirers (though she never remarried after the death of her husband).

GLORFINNIEL

Level: 18.

Race: Dúnadan.

Home: Osgiliath, Aglarond.

Glorfinniel in MERP

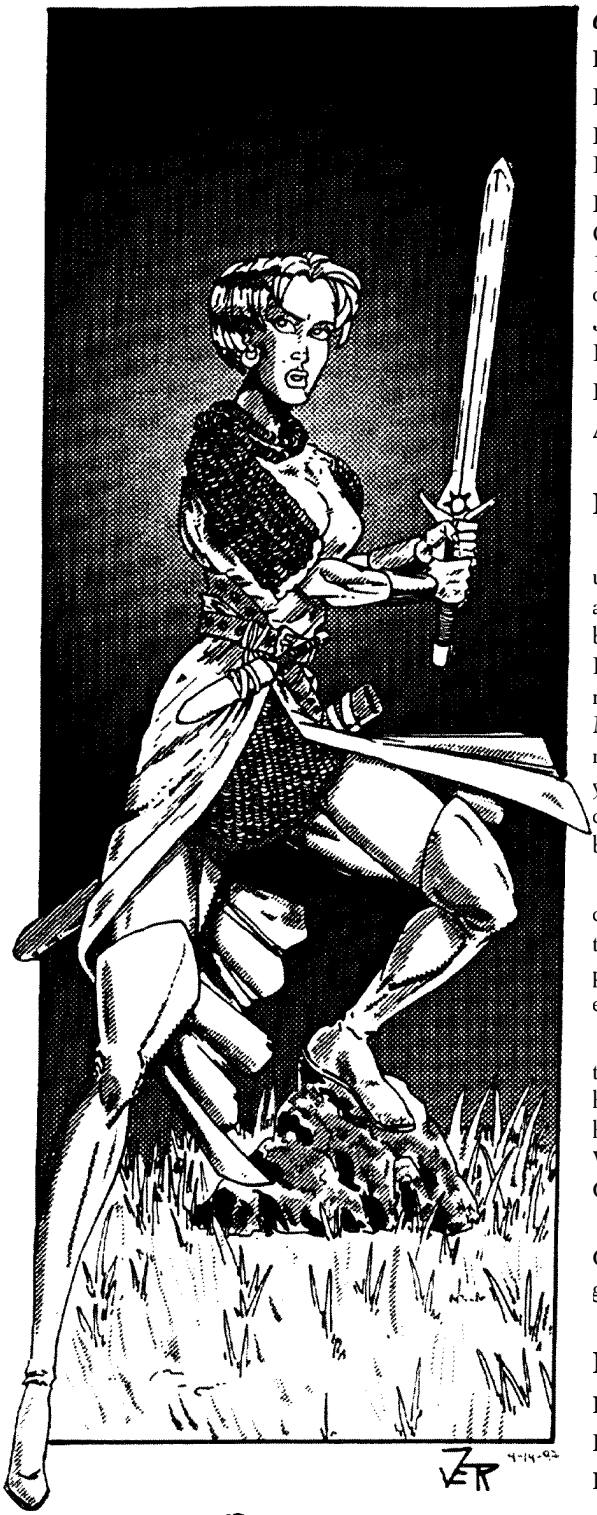
Hits: 141 **Melee OB:** 145 ls **Missile OB:** 119 cb **AT:** Chain (62)

MERP Profession: Warrior.

MERP Stats: AG 98, CO 94, IG 90, IT 92, PR 98, ST 71.

MERP Skills: M&M/Chain 101, Pole Arms 108, General/Ride 82, Miscellaneous/Perception 90, Secondary/Standard First Aid 92, Secondary/Lore (Aglarond) 90, Secondary/Influence (Leadership) 102.

MERP Spells: None.



Glorfinniel in Rolemaster

Hits: 141 **Melee OB:** 145 ls **Missile OB:** 119 cb **AT:** 15 (62)

RM Profession: Fighter.

RM Stats: Co 94, SD 97, Ag 81, Me 85, Re 90, St 71, Qu 98, Pr 100, In 92, Em 77.

RM Skills: Armor: Medium/Chain 101, Awareness: Search/ Observation 90, Combat Maneuvers/Mounted Combat 124, Combat Maneuvers/Ouickdraw 100, Influence/Leadership 102, Lore: General/ Region (Aglarond) 90, Outdoor: Animal/Riding 82, Self Control/ Adrenal Speed 98, Special Attacks/ Jousting 88, Technical/Trade: General/First Aid 92, Weapon: Pole Arm/ Lance 108.

RM Spells: None.

Appearance: 98.

EDHELIEL

Captain of the First Troop at the time of Glorfinniel's death, Edheliel was understandably unsure of her ability to lead the Knight-wives in the latter's absence. The youngest woman ever to rise to her level of authority (having been knighted at only eighteen years of age and made captain five years later), Edheliel's heroic exploits against the remnants of the Usurper's foreign mercenaries—as well as an oft-repeated encounter with a rampaging Troll of the Misty Mountains— ensured her reputation, and the wives under her command would follow her anywhere. Nonetheless, Edheliel was certain that her youth and relative inexperience as a leader would hamper her, and perhaps cause the destruction of the fragile order Glorfinniel had worked so hard to build.

Born to the princely house of Belfalas, Edheliel grew up surrounded by chivalric ideals. Her desire to emulate her father, brothers and uncles led her to a martial career, and her knowledge of the knightly traditions of Belfalas proved very significant in the growth of the company. Other wives sought to emulate her valor, her courtesy and her devotion to the welfare of others.

In her solitary vigil within the Glittering Caves, Edheliel was forever transformed. She encountered a spiritual presence more profound than she had ever experienced before, and she forever after understood that the Powers had not forgotten the Dúnedain, nor left them unprotected in Middle-earth. With the assistance of the Stone Maiden, Edheliel rekindled the Wives after Glorfinniel's death, and led them to even greater heights.

Edheliel retired as captain of the Wives in her old age, and retreated to the Glittering Caves to serve and maintain that holy site. She died alone in the grotto of the Stone Maiden, and was buried there beside Glorfinniel.

EDHELIEL

Level: 23.

Race: Dúnadan.

Home: Dol Amroth, Aglarond.

Edheliel in MERP

Hits: 156 **Melee OB:** 173 ls **Missile OB:** 154 cb **AT:** Chain (53)

MERP Profession: Warrior.

MERP Stats: AG 97, CO 99, IG 81, IT 85, PR 95, ST 94.

MERP Skills: M&M/Chain 118; 2-Handed 110, Pole Arms 142; General/ Ride 119, Miscellaneous/Perception 97, Secondary/Standard First Aid 99, Secondary/Lore (Aglarond) 95, Secondary/Influence (Leadership) 99.

MERP Spells: See "Edheliel's Special Powers" below.

Edheliel in Rolemaster

Hits: 156 Melee OB: 173 Is Missile OB: 154 cb AT: 15 (53)

RM Profession: Fighter.

RM Stats: Co 95, SD 99, Ag 100, Me 88, Re 72, St 96, Qu 93, Pr 90, In 79, Em 83.

RM Skills: Armor: Medium/Chain 118, Awareness: Perceptions/Alertness 28, Awareness: Searching/ Observation 97, Brawn/Power Striking 115, Combat Maneuvers/Mounted combat 136, Influence/Leadership 99, Lore: General/Region (Aglarond) 95, Outdoor: Animal/Riding 119, Special Attacks/Disarm (Armed) 112, Special Attacks/Jousting 112, Technical/Trade: General/ First Aid 99, Weapon: 2-Handed/ Greatsword 110, Weapon: Pole Arm/Lance 142.

RM Spells: See "Edheliel's Special Powers" below.

Appearance: 101.

Edheliel's Principal Items

Sword — Edheliel recovered this blade from the horde of Troll who was ravaging south of the Misty Mountains. It may have been an ancient sword of Gondolin, and was certainly of Elven make. At the feet of the Stone Maiden, it was further enchanted to be a Holy Weapon. The blade became the symbol of the Knight-wives' leadership, and was passed down to all the subsequent captains, including Imraphel and Thangwen. Its whereabouts after the Second Wainrider War are unknown. Nardis may have taken it with her back to Aglarond. MERP/RM: +20 longsword that strikes as a Holy weapon.

Other Gear — Edheliel is well-armed and armored, with equipment forged in Osgiliath or Dol Amroth. MERP/ RM: +15 composite bow, shield and chainmail.

Edheliel's Special Powers

Foresight — Edheliel's unique relationship with the Stone Maiden grants her certain powers to foresee events. This power is unpredictable and is not used consciously, but she can always see the outcome of events when her life or those of the Wives are at stake.

Prophecy — Again, thanks to the favor of Vairë's servant, Edheliel has occasional use of true prophetic gifts, during which time she can see the distant future. Edheliel does not choose when to use this power — it arises completely at the whim of the Stone Maiden. The events she sees are also chosen by the Maiden, and Edheliel is left to herself to interpret them.

Invocation — Edheliel is the chosen representative of the Stone Maiden, and leads all formal ceremonies within the Maia's grotto underneath the Caves of Aglarond. The additional powers that she might request from the Maiden are impossible to summarize. She has the power to make and bind oaths in the name of the Stone Maiden.

THE STONE MAIDEN

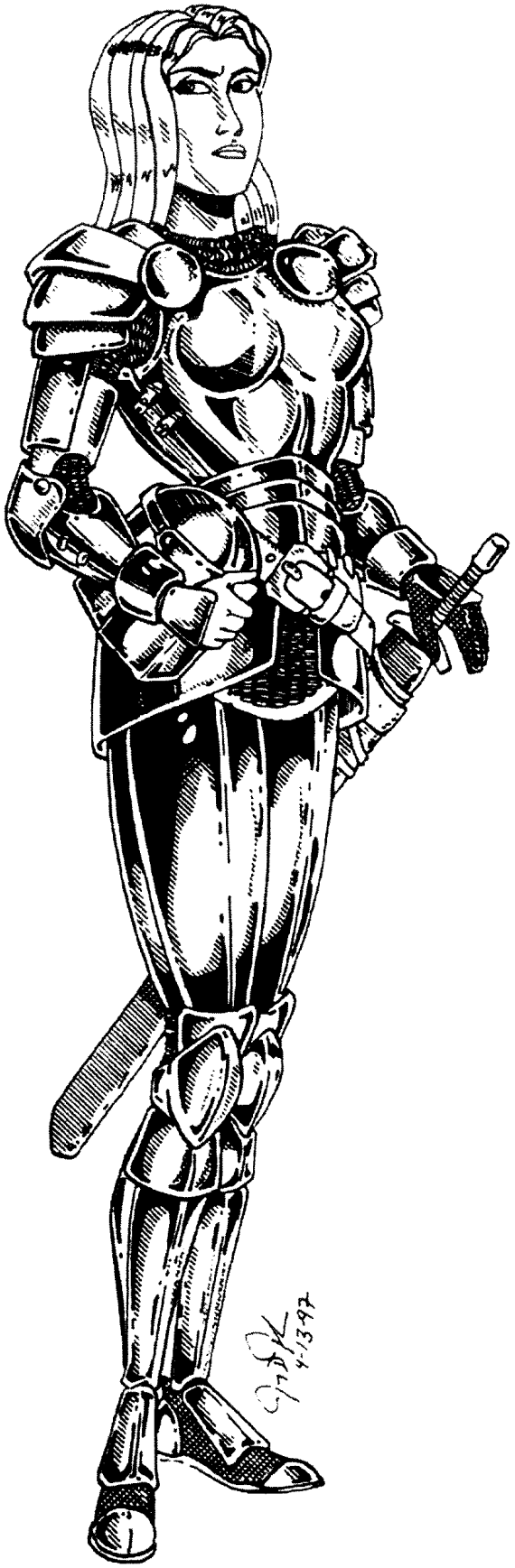
The original identity of the Maia now known to us as the Stone Maiden is, and perhaps forever shall be, a mystery. What is known is that she once served Vaire, spouse of Mandos, who acted among the Valar as mistress of Time and Fate.

Somehow the Maia-spirit came to reside within a pillar of stone

deep within the Glittering Caves. This may have been a voluntary self-imprisonment, a natural decay associated with her slow decrease in power over time, or the result of some outside hostile enchantment. Whatever the case, she rested within the rock for centuries until Edheliel found her during a solitary vigil. Making contact with the brave young warrioress, the Stone Maiden entered into a pact with the Knight-wives, extending what protection she could over Edheliel and her successors in return for their continued championing of Glorfinniel's vision.

To most mortals, the Stone Maiden is completely unidentifiable. She manifests herself as a massive stalagmite, more than six feet across at its base and rising twelve feet into the air, milky white in color, but stained with long streaks of pastel reds, blues and greens — beautiful, but by no account extraordinary. However, for those with eyes to see, the conical slope of the stone betrays her magnificent, moon-white gown sewn of otherworldly, silken strands by Vairë herself, and decorated with jewels of many colors — ruby, sapphire and emerald. Her pale white hair is luminescent, and frames a face possessed of transcendent wisdom and beauty. The Stone Maiden can move, and will speak with a quiet and severe voice to those whom she chooses to recognize, but she 'will not leave the grotto.

In her role as patroness of the Knight-wives, the Maiden grants powers of prophecy and foresight, powers which she possessed as a servant of Vairë. During the height of their power, she was also able to extend her blessing to the land and people surrounding the Caves that were her home, protecting them from the effects of the Plague.



IMRAPHEL

Captain of the Wives during the time of the Great Plague, Imraphel was another descendant of the princely line of Belfalas. She maintained close contact with her family in Dol Amroth, despite the fact that few of them understood her choice to dedicate herself to the Wives.

Imraphel was a tireless knight errant even during her tenure as dirgon of the berenais. Her greatest enemy was the Plague, and the devastation wrought by it upon the land she guarded was a constant spur to her. Rather than dwell upon the injuries that had befallen her people, Imraphel roused herself to ever-more industrious labor. Under her supervision, thousands of plague-victims were escorted to the Glittering Caves, where they rested and were restored by the grace of the Stone Maiden. Imraphel also organized construction works throughout Calenardhon, especially in the field of irrigation. These projects served two ends: they allowed families who had been devastated by the Plague to continue to farm and harvest despite their hardship, and they provided cleaner water to urban centers whose outdated sewage systems had proven fertile ground for the Plague.

Though a great warrior and heroic knight, it was not Imraphel's feats of arms which made her so capable a leader. She had an incredible talent for mobilization and organization, a way to maximize the efforts of everyone under her command. If Imraphel had a flaw, it was the single-mindedness of her devotion. Though she had many male servants and allies, Imraphel's personality was too strong for most suitors. Tradition amongst the Knight-wives also disinclined her to marriage, and she is not recorded to have taken a husband.

Captain Imraphel had pale golden hair, long and straight, with deep blue eyes. A woman of only moderate height, she possessed a well-proportioned and heroic frame, as well as a commanding posture and bearing.

IMRAPHEL

Level: 20.

Race: Dúnadan.

Home: Dol Amroth, Aglarond.

Imraphel in MERP

Hits: 141 **Melee OB:** 157 ls **Missile OB:** 128 cb **AT:** Plate (68)

MERP Profession: Warrior.

MERP Stats: AG 88, CO 90, IG 95, IT 99, PR 100, ST 83.

MERP Skills: M&M/Plate 126; Pole Arms 118; General/Ride 106, Miscellaneous/Perception 106, Secondary/Standard First Aid 97, Secondary/Influence (Leadership) 108, Secondary/ Influence (Military Organization) 99, Secondary/Lore (Aglarond) 91, Secondary/Lore (Lie Perception) 92, Secondary/ Lore (Tactics) 97.

MERP Spells: See "Imraphel's Special Powers" below.

Imraphel in Rolemaster

Hits: 141 **Melee OB:** 157 Is **Missile OB:** 128 cb **AT:** 20 (68)

RM Profession: Fighter.

RM Stats: Co 90, SD 97, Ag 88, Me 70, Re 95, St 83, Qu 93, Pr 100, In 99, Em 79.

RM Skills: Armor: Heavy/Plate 126, Awareness: Perceptions/ Alertness 39, Awareness: Searching/Lie Perception 92, Awareness: Searching/Observation 106, Combat Maneuvers/ Mounted combat 124, Influence/Leadership 108, Lore: General/ Region (Aglarond) 91, Outdoor: Animal/Riding 106, Self Control/Stunned Maneuvering 111, Special Attacks/Jousting 97, Technical/Trade: General/ First Aid 97, Tech/Trade: Professional/Military Organization 99, Tech/Trade: Vocational/ Tactics 97, Weapon: Pole Arm/Lance 118.

RM Spells: See "Imraphel's Special Powers" below.

Appearance: 99.

THANGWEN

Thangwen was the last Captain of the Knight-wives, a brave and cunning war-leader devoted to land and king. Five centuries of the Wives' work had made her position a highly respected and well-entrenched one. Wealthy and with a degree of influence normally found only among male rulers, Thangwen labored hard to foment social change and a stronger female presence in the Gondorian military. To this end, she spent much of her time in Minas Anor, Osgiliath and the other great cities of the kingdom.

Unfortunately, Thangwen's success did not materialize before her untimely death in the Second Wainrider War. When news came of the invasion she returned immediately to Harnost, where the Wives had already marshaled in her absence. She led them to Eärnil's side in time to prove instrumental in his battles with the barbarians. She led a counter-charge into the Sagath lines when their assault threatened to break Eärnil's already embattled troops, and although her mission succeeded, she and her company were cut off from the main body of Eärnil's forces. Two rescue attempts failed before the third was successful, but by that time the Wives themselves had all but perished. Thangwen was one of the first to

Imraphel's Principal Items

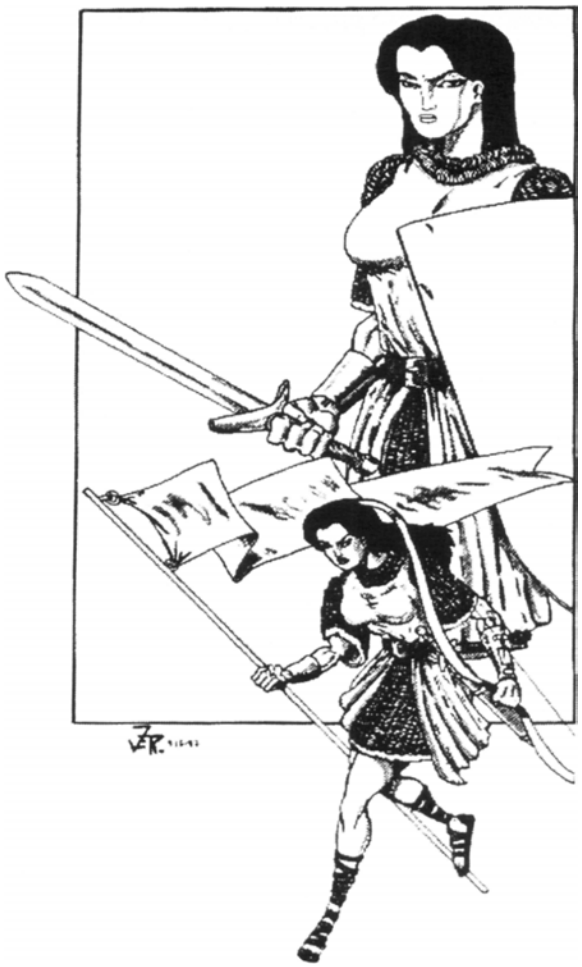
Sword — As Captain of the Knight-wives, Imraphel wields the Sword of Edheliel. By the time of Imraphel, the blade's reputation has grown — it is well-known to have the power to cleave truth from falsehood (that is, anyone who holds the blade and tells a lie will surely perish). This legend is, in actuality, itself a falsehood, but Imraphel never saw fit to correct the notion, and the truth was known only to herself and her closest friends. MERP/RM: +20 longsword that strikes as a Holy weapon.

Armor — Imraphel was given this suit of wondrous plate armor by grateful Dwarves of Khazad-dûm. She wore it throughout her career as captain, was buried in it, and it still features prominently in iconography to this day. MERP/RM: +20 Plate Armor with no Minimum Maneuver Penalty.

Other Gear—As with the rest of the Wives, Imraphel was well armed and outfitted with other weapons and gear from Osgiliath, Minas Anor or Dol Amroth. MERP/RM: +15 non-magical shield, composite bow.

Imraphel's Special Powers

Foresight, Prophecy, Invocation — As with Edheliel, above.



fall. Only her close friend and companion, Nardis, survived.

Thangwen was a tall, statuesque beauty with well-tanned skin, long, straight black hair and dark eyes that gave hints of the depths of her resolve. Among all the virtues of knighthood, there were none that she did not master, but she was especially brilliant as a rider and archer. Many men would brave her forceful will to seek Thangwen's hand, but she denied them all. The great numbers of fallen Wives made a burial in the Glittering Caves impractical, and Thangwen was the only captain who was not placed beside Glorfinniel, in the sacred chambers of the Stone Maiden. Instead, she was buried with the rest of her comrades on the site of her death.

THANGWEN

Level: 19.

Race: Dúnadan.

Home: Dol Amroth, Aglarond, Osgiliath, Minas Anor.

Thangwen in MERP

Hits: 147 **Melee OB:** 171 ls **Missile OB:** 139 cb **AT:** Chain (64)

MERP Profession: Warrior.

MERP Stats: AG 93, CO 95, IG 82, IT 89, PR 97, ST 98.

MERP Skills: M&M/Chain 120; Pole Arms 130; General/Ride 106, Miscellaneous/ Perception 94, Secondary/Standard First Aid 93, Secondary/Lore (Aglarond) 87, Secondary/Influence (Diplomacy) 94, Secondary/Influence (Leadership) 94.

MERP Spells: See "Thangwen's Special Powers" below.

Thangwen in Rolemaster

Hits: 147 **Melee OB:** 171 ls **Missile OB:** 139 cb **AT:** 15 (64)

RM Profession: Fighter.

RM Stats: Co 95, SD 100, Ag 93, Me 82, Re 77, St 98, Qu 90, Pr 97, In 89, Em 72.

RM Skills: Armor: Medium/Chain 120, Awareness: Searching/Observation 94, Combat Maneuvers/Mounted combat 126, Combat Maneuvers/Reverse Stroke 104, Influence/ Diplomacy 94, Influence/Leadership 94, Lore: General/Region (Aglarond) 87, Outdoor: Animal/Riding 106, Self Control/Adrenal Speed 109, Self Control/ Adrenal Strength 109, Self Control/Frenzy 109, Special Attacks/Brawling 72, Special Attacks/Disarm Foe (Armed) 72, Special Attacks/Jousting 104, Technical/Trade: General/First Aid 93, Weapon: Pole Arm/Lance 130.

RM Spells: See "Thangwen's Special Powers" below.

Appearance: 95.

Thangwen's Principal Items

Sword—As Captain of the Knight-wives, Thangwen wields the Sword of Edheliel. MERP/RM: +20 longsword that strikes as a Holy weapon.

The Banner of the Knight-wives — Though no one knows the precise date of its making, this banner was carried into battle throughout the 18th and later centuries. Its effects upon the morale of the Wives and their followers was measurable and profound. Thangwen did not carry the banner herself, instead using an appointed standard-bearer. MERP/RM: So long as the banner remains aloft, the Wives receive a +30 bonus on any roll to keep morale or resist fear, including the effects of magical creatures (such as a Balrog or a Ringwraith). However, should the banner fall, the bonus becomes a -30 penalty instead.

Other Gear — Thangwen is well-armed and armored, with equipment forged in Osgiliath or Minas Anor. MERP/RM: +15 composite bow, shield and chainmail.

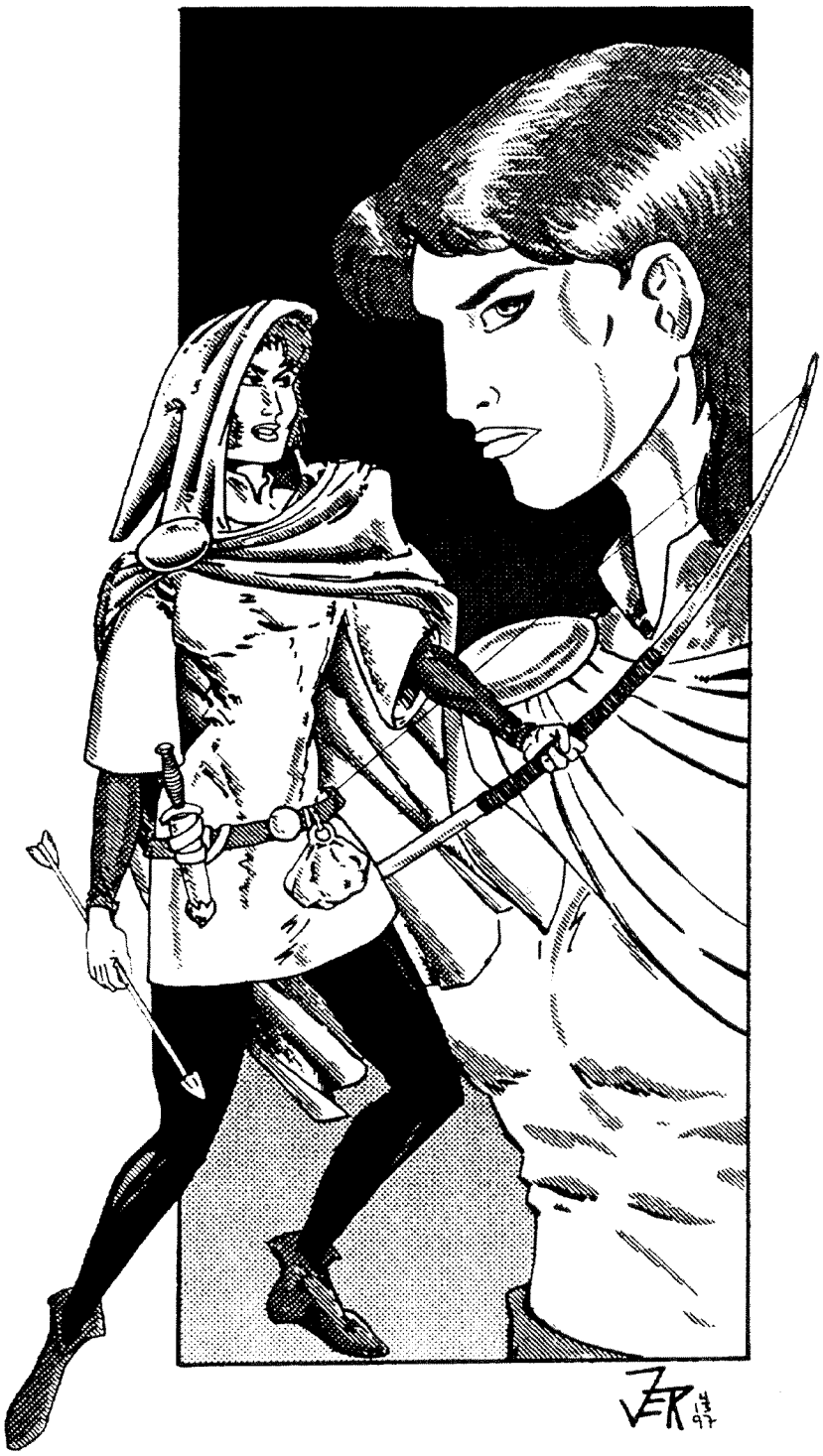
Thangwen Special Powers

Foresight, Prophecy, Invocation — As with Edheliel, above.

NARDIS

Previously known as a close friend and nearly constant companion to Thangwen, Nardis earned the dubious distinction of being the only knight-wife to survive the charge of the Sagath. Heartbroken at the death of her captain and comrade, she returned in quiet pilgrimage to the Glittering Caves. In the middle of the night she emerged from the grotto of the Stone Maiden, and she never returned there for the rest of her days. She spoke of that vigil with no one, and to this day the subject of it is unknown.

However, Nardis did not forsake her sisters. She traveled throughout Calenardhon for half a century, telling the tales of the Knight-wives' deeds and ensuring that they would pass forever into legend. She remained an enigmatic figure, often changing her



name and identity, almost as if she wished to divest herself of her life under the banner of the Wives. Her tales spread, and legends of her appearance continued to circulate long after she must have surely perished.

Nardis was a woman of plain appearance, with brown hair cut short, long slender fingers and an expressive face. Her hair streaked gray, her stride weakened, and her voice wavered as she aged, but in many ways the years did not touch her. Nonetheless, she was frail and bed-ridden for a year before her handmaid, her sole companion in her last days, emerged from her bedroom to announce that she was dead.

NARDIS

Level: 12.

Race: Dúnadan.

Home: Aglarond, Calenardhon.

Nardis in MERP

Hits: 88 **Melee OB:** *76* ls **Missile OB:** *47* cb **AT:** None (6)

MERP Profession: Bard.

MERP Stats: AG 81, CO *72*, IG *97*, IT *94*, PR 90, ST 60.

MERP Skills: General/Ride *78*, Subterfuge/Stalk Hide *70*, Miscellaneous/ Perception *72*, Secondary/Standard Acting 110, First Aid *73*, Foraging *78*, Secondary/ Artistic Poetic Improvisation 110, Tale Telling 110, Secondary/Craft Disguise 69, Secondary/Influence Begging *73*, Propaganda 92, Public Speaking 92, Secondary/Lore Aglarond *87*, Calenardhon *87*, Enedhwaith *87*.

MERP Spells: None.

Nardis in Rolemaster

Hits: 88 **Melee OB:** *76* ls **Missile OB:** *47* cb **AT:** 5(6)

RM Profession: Bard.

RM Stats: Co *72*, SD 92, Ag 81, Me *97*, Re *79*, St 60, Qu 89, Pr 90, In *94*, Em 98

RM Skills: Artistic: Active/Acting 110, Poetic Improvisation 110, Tale Telling 110, Awareness: Perceptions Alertness *27*, Awareness: Searching/ Observation *72*, Combat Maneuvers/ Mounted Combat 65, Influence/ Propaganda 92, Public Speaking 92, Lore: General/Aglarond *87*, Calenardhon *87*, Enedhwaith *87*, Outdoor: Animal/ Riding *78*, Outdoor: Environmental/ Foraging *78*, Survival *78*, Self Control/ Mnemonics 85, Subterfuge: Mechanics/ Disguise 69, Subterfuge: Stealth/Hiding *70*, Stalking *70*, Tech/Trade: General Begging *73*, First Aid *73*.

RM Spells: None.

Appearance: 85.

CREATING A KNIGHT-WIFE CHARACTER

Racial Background

Most (though not all) Knight-wives possess the bloodline of a Dúnadan noble family. Depending on the strength of the bloodline they might be classified as Dúnedain (MERP)/High Man (RM) or as Gondorian (MERP)/Mixed Urban man (RM).

Profession

Knight-wives and their attendant foot-

soldiers should be either Warriors (MERP) or Fighters (RM). Depending on the level of reliable magic-use in the campaign, Knight-wives who labor in the service of the Stone Maiden may be better generated as Paladins or Seers (RM). Otherwise, spell-casters are not found amongst them. However, the Knight-wives emphasize speed and agility over strength; it is recommended that the prime stats for Knight-wives be either Agility (MERP) or Constitution and Quickness (RM, instead of Constitution and Strength).

Backgrounds, Role Traits and Adolescence Skill Development

All of this information should be calculated as normal for the character's racial background.

Apprentice Skill Development

In MERP, all characters have the same number of apprentice skill points, and Knight-wives should spend them as follows: one-Handed Edged Weapons (2 ranks), Missile Weapons (1 rank), Pole Arms (1 rank), Chain (3 ranks), Ride (2 ranks), Body Development (2 ranks). Rolemaster has many more variables, and it is impossible to predict how many development points the character will have. However, Knight-wife training is exceptionally rigorous, and candidates with less than 71 Development Points will be turned away. For those that have 71 or more DP, the points should be spent as follows:

SKILL	RANKS	DEVELOPMENT POINTS
Armor: Medium	2	4
Armor: Medium/Chain	2	4
Body Development	2	7
Combat Maneuvers/ Mounted combat	2	12
Influence	1	2
Influence/Leadership	1	2
Lore: General	1	1
Lore: General/ Region(Aglarond)	1	1
Outdoor: Animal	2	5
Outdoor: Animal/Riding	2	5
SpecialAttacks/ Jousting	1	2
Technical/Trade: General	1	3
Technical/Trade: General/FirstAid	1	3
Weapon: 1-H Edged	2	6
Weapon: 1-H Edged/Long Sword	2	6
Weapon:Missile	1	2
Weapon: Missile/Composite Bow	1	2
Weapon: Pole Arm	1	2
Weapon: Pole Arm/Lance	1	2

Master Military Table

KNIGHT-WIVES

Name **Lvl** **Hits** **AT** **DB** **Sh** **Gr** **Mel** **Mis** **MM** **Notes**

Knight-Captain 17 151 15(+15) 65 Y(+15) Y 167 ls 142 cp 0 Dúnadan Warrior, Glorfinniel's chosen successor and leader of all the Wives. Wields +20 Holylongsword, + 15 composite bow, shield and chainmail.

High Captains 15 145 15(+15) 65 Y(+15) Y 152 ls 132 cp 0 Dúnadan Warriors, female, one leads each company (including infantry) and are also chosen for special offices (wardens). Armed with +15 non-magical longswords, composite bows, chainmail, and shields, riding superior medium war-horses and equipped with up to five lances.

Captains 13 137 15(+15) 60 Y(+10) Y 142 ls 122 cp 0 Dúnadan warriors, one leads each Troop of 60-100 warriors (including infantry Troops). Armed similar to High-Captains above, reduce shield bonus to +10.

Lieutnants 11 127 15(+10) 55 Y(+10) Y 127 ls 109 cp 0 Dúnadan Warriors, each commands a line of 20 Wives. Armed as above, but reduce all equipment to +10 bonus.

First Troop 9 121 15(+10) 50 Y (+5) Y 117 ls 97 cp 0 Dúnadan Warriors,numbering 50-100. The First Troop contains the toughest and most capable of the Wives. Armed as above, but reduce all equipment to +10 and shields to +5.

Other Troops *7* 107 15(+5) *45* Y (+5) Y 98 ls 81 cp 0 Dúnadan Warriors, numbering from 180-400 women (depending on time period). Armed as above, reduce all equipment to +5.

INFANTRY

Lieutnants *7* 89 15(+5) 40 Y Y 98 ls *76* cp Gondorian Warriors, armed with +5 non-magical longswords, composite bows and chainmail, carrying shields. Lead Lines of 20 warriors, may be male or female.

Second Division 5 *77* 15 35 Y Y 81 ls 55 cp Gondorian Warriors, veteran men and women of the infantry companies. Patrol Aglarond, carry messages, etc. Number 240-400 men and women.

Third Division *4* *74* 15 35 Y Y *72* ls *47* cp Gondorian Warriors, new recruitsbusy with training and garrison duty. Reserve troops only. Men and women, numbering 240-400 (depending on time period).

CHARACTERS

Glorfinniel 18 141 15(+15) 62 Y(+15) Y 145 ls 119 cp Dúnadan Warrior, wields + 15 longsword, composite bow, shield and chainmail. Founder of the Knight-wives.

Edheliel 23 156 15(+15) 53 Y(+15) Y 173 ls 154 cp Dúnadan Warrior, wields +20 Holy longsword, +15 composite bow, shield and chainmail. Prophetic powers. Glorfinniel's successor.

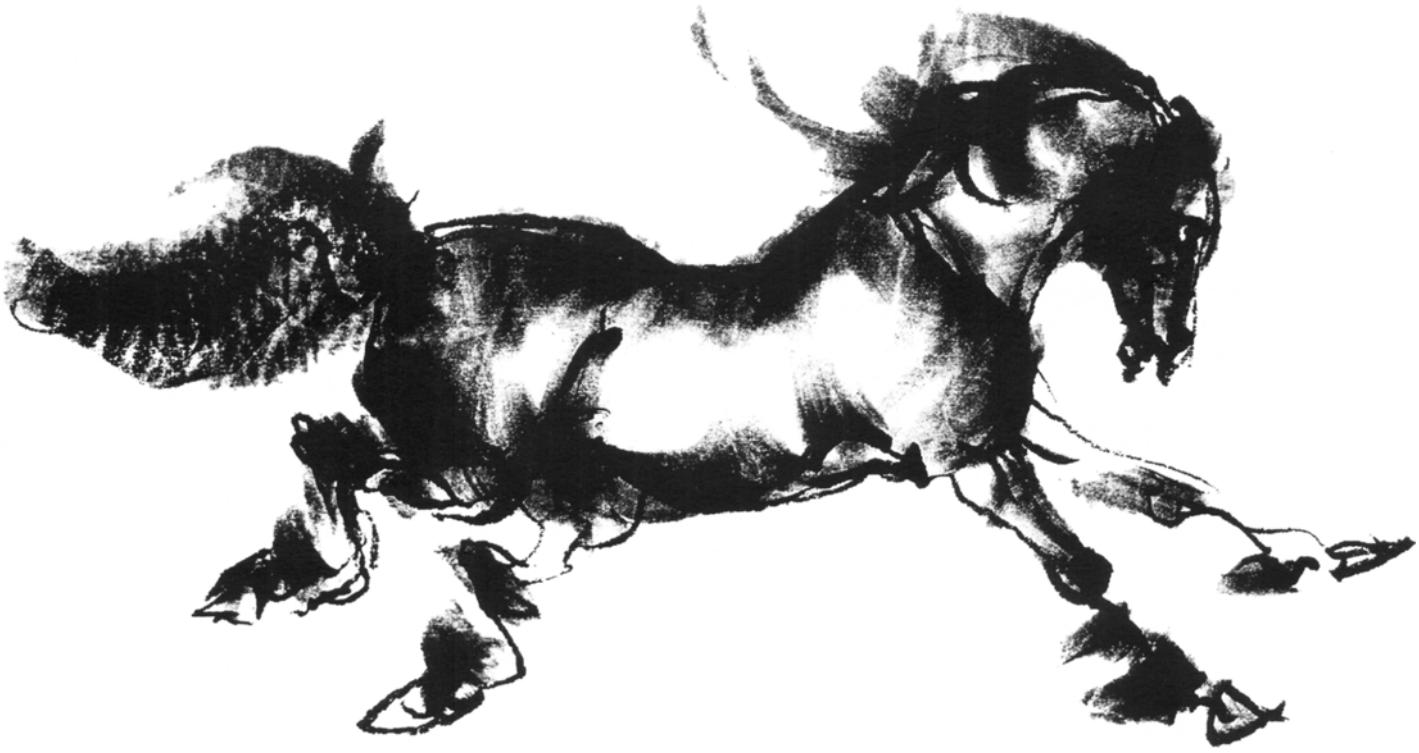
Imraphel 20 141 20(+20) 68 Y(+15) Y 157 ls 128 cp Dúnadan Warrior, wields +20 Holy longsword, +20 plate armor, +15 composite bow and shield. Prophetic powers. Captain during the Great Plague.

Thangwen 19 147 15(+15) 64 Y(+15) Y 171 ls 139 cp Dúnadan Warrior, wields +20 Holy longsword, +15 composite bow, shield and chainmail. Prophetic powers. Last captain of the Wives.

Nardis 12 88 5 6 N N 76 ls 47 cp Dúnadan Bard, true fate unknown, last survivor of the Wives.

Stone Maiden 200 200 100 N N 200 200 0 Maia Bard/Seer

Playing the Ponies: Ideas for Using Horses in your Middle-earth Campaign



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Horses and ponies play an important role both in Tolkien's legendarium and in fantasy role playing in general. Unfortunately, they are too often treated as little more than four-footed motorcycles which transport characters from place to place, and are otherwise ignored. This is, I believe, a reflection of the age of the internal combustion engine that we live in, where direct experience of horses is becoming less and less common. To some extent, even in The Hobbit, *the Dwarves' and Bilbo's ponies were portrayed in this manner (not to mention winding up as Orc or dragon-chow). In The* Lord of the Rings, *however, every horse or pony used by a major character is given a name and usually a description.*

This article is an attempt to assist gamers in using horses both more realistically and in a spirit closer to that which Tolkien manifested in The Lord of the Rings. *(I too have scarcely more personal experience with horses than with actual sword-fighting, and would welcome comments from any real rulers.) I have at times used the word "horse" in the generic sense of any domestic member of the equine family: horses, ponies, donkeys, hinnies and mules.*

I wish to make clear that despite the footnotes, this article was not meant to be scholarly in the same vein as were the essays of Michael Martinez and Lalaith (OH 15/16). There was little conjecture in their articles and where it occurred it was plainly stated. My article, on the other hand, while it does not anywhere to my knowledge contradict Tolkien, contains some statements which are elaborations on my part. For example, nowhere did Tolkien write that the Dwarves were the first to use ponies and mules as pack animals. I have made that assumption on my own because it seemed reasonable to me given the circumstances and Dwarven nature. I certainly, just like the Fourth Age Gondorian scholars I mention, could be in error.

A SHORT HISTORY OF HORSES IN MIDDLE-EARTH

Horses, as all life in Middle-earth, were created by Eru through the Valar, especially Yavanna. After the fall of the Lamps, The Valar retreated to Valinor, but Yavanna preserved the life of Middle-earth by laying a "sleep" upon it. The corruption of Melkor unfortunately tainted all of Arda to a greater or lesser degree. Valinor was one area where Melkor's corruptiveness

had little effect; thus, life there was closer to the original thought of Eru than in Middle-earth.[1] Horses were no exception to this. The quality of the horses in Valinor was thereby higher than that of the "native" horses of Endor. A stock of Valinorean horses (*errych,* sing, *arroch*) were brought to Middle-earth on the ships stolen by Feanor and his sons. A portion of these horses were later given to the other Noldor, during the initial improved relations that existed between the Sons of Fëanor and their relatives after Fëanor's death. These horses formed the core of the Noldorin cavalry, which played an important (yet still under-recognized) role in the battles in Beleriand.

Still, there were never enough of the pure Valinorean horses to meet all their needs, so the Noldor cross-bred their stallions with common mares captured locally. This mixed strain (*pererrych,* sing. *perarroch*) was still far superior to any horse possessed by anyone else at the time. This fact, combined with the Noldor's remarkable riding skill, was so decisive that Morgoth never even attempted to field a cavalry force of his own. Instead he used warg-riding Orcs (and, of course, Glaurung) to counter the Elven riders. After the First Age ended, an attempt was made to retain a pure Valinorean bloodline. Although this was largely successful, there was (as with everything else in Middle-earth) a gradual diminishing of power and quality among these pure-bred Elven horses. So, while some errych (like Glorfindel's Third Age steed Asfaloth) were of excellent quality, even they could not match the power of those first Elven horses.

When the Edain became allied with the Noldor, they too most likely acquired Elven horses from their patrons. Some of these pererrych (and perhaps a few *errych)* were taken to Númenor with the Edain where they all became prized possessions of their masters. Legends tell that the bond between the Númenórean riders and their horses was so strong that the animals could respond to their masters mere thought.[2] This certainly sounds like an arrochren trait to me. Despite having such superlative mounts, the Númenóreans always relied primarily on naval might, and therefore never fielded large cavalry forces of their own. They quite often used local auxiliaries for cavalry support of their armies, which were always based on heavy infantry with an abundance of archers.[5] Meanwhile, back in Middle-earth east of the Blue Mountains, use of horse-kinds remained at a very basic level at the beginning of the Second Age. All the indigenous horse-kinds in these areas were originally wild, of course, and would have been unfit for the duties which their descendants would later perform until they had been improved by selective breeding. Most Avarin Elves preferred to dwell in heavily wooded areas (of which there was a greater abundance in the Elder Days than in later ages). Use of horses would have been limited in such an environment, but the general idea of using horses for mounts would have been familiar to them (if for no other reason, because of their knowledge of Oromë).

It was the ingenious Dwarves, however, who, in their mining activities, first used ponies for pack animals. They later were able to develop a pony strong enough to ride. They were also the first to recognize the advantages of mules. Still, there was little long-distance trade east of Beleriand in this early period except by water routes, and therefore little incentive to build roads. This made travel through the immense woods of the First Age difficult on horse or ponyback. Therefore, development of a strong native riding animal progressed only slowly in the interior of Middle-earth. However, as some of the Elves of Beleriand (especially the Noldor) migrated eastward, they naturally brought a few of their superior stock of horses with them. Mannish populations also remained low at the dawn of the Second Age. With so much bountiful land available, there was little need for Mannish tribes to eke out a living on the semi-arid steppes. Because of this, in my opinion, the development of nomadic horse-people of any significance did not occur until at least the mid-Second Age.[4] In any case, the Easterling horse-tribes, never yet even having encountered the Númenóreans, lacked the desire to join with Sauron in an attack upon them or the realms of the Eldar in the West in his Eriadorian war (S. A.1690ff). As the Númenóreans later expanded their enclaves and became oppressive, Sauron was more successful in recruiting Men of the East and South to his service, and the Easterlings, now grown in size, provided him with an important cavalry contingent, especially in the War of the Last Alliance. In that war, however, the Easterling horsemen met other cavalry who were more than their match in combat.

These riders were not only the Noldor of Lindon, but also Northmen from both Eriador and Northern Rhovanion.[5] During the course of the Second Age, both these groups had acquired pererrych. For the Northmen of Eriador, how this occurred is not difficult to follow. They dwelt in the area from the Baranduin and Nenuial, across the North Downs to the Weather Hills. This region was excellent horse country; much less wooded than the lands further south, even before the coming of the Númenóreans and their axes. These Northmen were closely related to the Edain, and were friendly with the Elves from early in the age.[6] They would have observed and learned Elven cavalry techniques, and possessed such technical advances as iron weapons and the stirrup, long before other Mannish horsemen. They also acquired from the Elves superior breeding stock in the form of pererrych. These horses may have been a gift from the Elves for assisting them in the war against Sauron. By that time, these same Northmen had also re-established contact with their long lost relatives, the Númenóreans, and could have received superior horses from them as well.

In Other Hands 15/16, both Michael Martinez and Lalaith note that these Eriadorian Northmen "disappear from recorded history" after Sauron's invasion. While this is true, I also feel that given the small amount of material that Tolkien wrote regarding the region during this time period, it is not necessary to assume all the Northmen left the area or ceased to exist. I find it more likely that they retreated beyond the Lhûn with the Elves. Later many were absorbed into the expanding Númenórean enclaves. Other, more independent factions, retained more of their Northmen cultural identity (at least until the end of the age) and served as some of the local auxiliaries previously mentioned. Such auxiliaries would have been especially useful during the War of the Last Alliance.

For the Northmen of Rhovanion, exactly how they have acquired pererrych is more problematic. That at least some of them did so is, however, without a doubt, for it is from these Northmen that the Rohirrim descended. Gandalf himself testified about the quality of the horses of Rohan.[7] I offer then the following possibilities of where the Rohirric pererrych could have originated.

The first possibility is that the ancestors of the Rohirrim cross bred common horses with mearas. The problem with this theory is that there is no evidence that any mear had been tamed before Eorl did so in Third Age 2501. Of course, it is possible for such breeding to have occurred without the mear stallion being tamed, but this seems, given the proud nature of the mearas, to be unlikely to me.

The second possibility, is that after the War of the Last Alliance, the Easterling horse-tribes, like all of Sauron's armies, were utterly defeated. The wide plains stretching north of Mordor all the way to the Iron Hills were practically uninhabited (or at least undefended). Northmen cavalry auxiliaries from Eriador, seeking independence from direct Dúnadan suzerainty may have joined their newly acquainted Rhovanion cousins at this time, and helped settle these newly "conquered" lands. These groups eventually developed into what we know as the Ehwathrumi.[8]

Another possibility involves the Alliance of Dwarves and Men, that existed in the Anduin Vale during the Second Age[9]. During the time of this Alliance, the Dwarves of Moria also enjoyed a close friendship with the Noldor of Eregion.[10]

The Men of the Alliance could have been given pererrych by the Noldor at that time, or by Galadriel and Amroth after they arrived in Lórinand. Later, when Sauron took his revenge on the Men of this Alliance, survivors could have fled to areas north and east of Mirkwood and became the ancestors of the Ehwathrumi. (The survivors that remained in the area, hidden in the forest and caves could quite likely have been the ancestors of the Woodmen and Beornings). Finally, Michael Martinez, in his aforementioned article, speculates that the Northmen of Eriador may have moved to the Anduin Vale to escape Sauron's invasion. If so, they would have had to flee soon again to escape the revenge I just mentioned. Perhaps they then joined their eastern cousins.

The Ehwathrumi and their descendants were not the only branch of their people to make good use of horses. For among the Northmen, the relationship that existed between the bear-clans and their horses was even more extraordinary.

The bear-clans later became known as the Beornings.[11] Rather than using their horses as war-mounts, the Beornings had at least some horses and ponies (and other animals) that they were able to use as domestic servants.[12]

In *The Hobbit,* for example, Beorn's horses, "sleek and well groomed...with intelligent faces," can communicate with him, notifying him of Bilbo's and Gandalf's approach.[13] With the help of his dogs and sheep (!), these ponies set a table. Clearly, this behavior indicates more than just superior breeding and training. This closeness with animals is, of course, understandable, since Beorn could become an animal himself, but there is also a "magic" of some sort at work here, I believe. I also tend to think that ownership of animals of this intelligence, like the skin-changing abilities, was probably limited to the chieftains of the bear-clan, and thus rare. Therefore, while Beorn was willing to let Thorin and Company use his ponies for a short time, he never let them out of his sight. How Beorn and his ancestors acquired these animals and abilities is unknown. But it is interesting that all the lords of the Northmen mentioned by Tolkien had unique gifts for dealing with animals: The mearas would bear no one but those of the line of Eorl; and remember Bard's surprise at Lake-town when he was able to understand the thrush. My guess is that these animals or abilities were all gifts of Oromë.

Let us move on now to another culture whose use of horses reached a high level: the Haradrim. The deserts of the South, even more than the eastern steppes, were little-inhabited. The exceptions to this were fertile areas (such as the peninsula of Umbar) which became dominated by the Númenóreans in the late Second Age (c. 2000ff). The Númenóreans would have brought their excellent horses to Umbar, some of which in time would have been acquired by local Southron tribes. Bred with the already good local stock, these developed into the fine Haradic breed of horses which the Southron cavalry used in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields (among others). One may still consider these Haradic horses as pererrych, though their quality, while excellent, was still less than that of the northern breeds.

Almost all of the original Númenórean horses in Umbar were taken by the King's Men for use in the Great Armament of Ar-Pharazôn. Their loss gave the Faithful a definite cavalry advantage over the surviving King's Men in Middle-earth, even without the Northmen. This forced the King's Men to rely almost entirely on their Southron allies for cavalry support. Naturally, many of the Faithful's horses were also brought from Númenor, but being friendly with the Elves, the Faithful had the opportunity to acquire additional high quality pererrych and again even errych until the end of the Third Age. Aragorn's meeting with his Dúnadan comrades from the North is a good illustration of this, since it is from Rivendell that they bring Aragorn's own horse, Roheryn.[14] It might seem odd that this group of experienced Rangers and the sons of Elrond the Wise would bring a horse with them to Rohan—which means Horse-land!

Later in the chapter we learn that they knew what they were doing after all. First, Aragorn gladly gives up his Rohirric horse for Roheryn. Then, when the group is entering the Paths of the Dead, only the Rohirric horse shies from entering until calmed by Legolas.[15] These horses of the Dúnedain, despite their somewhat shaggy appearance, were most likely almost pure-bred errych. Horses such as these were probably not common either in the North or in Gondor, but these Men were remnants of the royalty of Arnor and personally known to Elrond.

Another well-known example of high quality horses and riders in Middle-earth is found in the knights of Dol Amroth. The lords of this area also had a close relationship with the Elves at one time. After all, one of their princes even married an Elf-woman. I can easily imagine Elves journeying to Edhellond to set sail to the West, leaving their horses behind with the friendly Dúnedain.

Whose was the superior cavalry, that of Dol Amroth or Rohan? I think the best answer to this is to say that the knights of Dol Amroth were a small elite group of heavy cavalry whose purpose was to support an army consisting mostly of infantry. The Muster of Rohan on the other hand, provided a force of 12,000 or more horsemen. This mounted army was mostly composed of medium cavalry with light cavalry and horse-archer support. One of the great strengths of this army was the speed with which it could travel: approximately eighty miles per day (more than three times the rate of an infantry army).[16]

ELVEN RIDING STYLES

I would like at this point to note a seeming contradiction involving Elven riding styles as described in The Lord of the Rings. Much is made of how Legolas asks that the saddle and reins be taken off the

horse Arod when it is presented to him by Eomer. Legolas then mounts the horse and controls it by spoken word alone, much to the amazement of the Rohirrim.[16] In contrast to this, the Elven-lord Glorfindel uses a saddle and stirrups on his horse Asfaloth.[17] What shall we make of this? Is Legolas a better rider than Glorfindel?

Not at all. Glorfindel, in all likelihood, could ride bareback the same as Legolas if he wished. The difference can be explained by what the two Elves did on their horses. Legolas, though he certainly did a considerable amount of traveling by horseback in the story, is never described as fighting while mounted. This is not surprising for an Elf of Mirkwood. His primary weapon was a long bow, which would be very difficult, if not impossible, to shoot from horseback. His long knife would also be of little use on a horse. Legolas is not included in the initial charge of riders from the Hornburg at Helm's Deep, though he soon rides up to gaze at the mysterious wood of Huorns.[18]

Glorfindel, on the other hand, was a true mounted warrior with the weapons and equipment to match. This too is not surprising, considering the long cavalry tradition of the Noldor. The saddle and stirrups gave him extra support needed to remain firmly on his horse when absorbing the severe shock of contact that occurs when weapon meets target at high speed. It seems then that at least some Elves such as Legolas preferred to ride bareback if all they were doing was traveling. When an Elf engaged in melee combat from horseback however, he was wise to use the extra tack as did Glorfindel.

WHAT ARE THE *MEARAS*?

We all know that Shadowfax was the greatest horse alive during the time of the War of the Ring. And we know that Shadowfax was one of the *mearas*.

However, I cannot determine with absolute certainty what Tolkien meant by the term. Why the confusion, you may ask? Appendix A clearly indicates that the mearas were descendants of Eorl's horse, Felaróf, and would bear no one but the King of the Mark.[19] True, this is the generally accepted definition; but there are some difficulties. Twice Shadowfax is referred to as chief of the mearas.[20] My question, then, is: where are the rest? As Christopher Tolkien points out, mearas is the Old English word for horses.[21] Old English is the language Tolkien used to represent the language of the Rohirrim.[22] Could mearas simply be a term used for all the horses of Rohan with Shadowfax being, of course, their chief? Possibly, but I think that this is not enough evidence to overturn the statement made in Appendix A. The authors of ICE's *Creatures of Middle-earth* (1st edition) attempt to answer the question of the missing mearas by depicting Théoden's horse Snowmane as one of them. There are two problems with this. First, Théoden used a saddle on Snowmane, while neither Gandalf nor Eorl put a saddle on their respective steeds. Again, this could be explained by what the individuals did on the horses, and it's true that Gandalf seems to have only used spells while in mounted combat on Shadowfax. I doubt very much, however, that Eorl the Young did not engage in melee combat while riding Felaróf. Mearas are superior to even purebred Elven horses, possessed of an intelligence perhaps on the same level as the great eagles. It's highly probable that, in this single case, no saddle would be needed or desired by one of the mearas in order for the rider to engage in melee combat. As Gandalf stated, if one of the mearas consents to let you ride it, it assumes the responsibility of ensuring that you remain on its back.[23] Finally, if Snowmane were truly of the mearas, I hardly think this would escape mention somewhere in the books.

I believe the ICE authors have made a honest error. In the Fourth Age, Snowmane's mound became the center point for commemorations of the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Gondorian poets naturally assumed that the horse of the King of the Mark that was buried there in honor was one of the mearas, which soon became widely believed. This leads me to suspect that the ICE authors derived the section on horses from late Third or Fourth Age Gondorian sources. For example, they also describe Elven horses as being descendants of Oromë's mount Nahar. This parallels the Rohirric legend of the origins of the mearas. Despite King Elessar's attempts to restore lost knowledge, by that time much of what was known in Gondor of the Eldar Days had been forgotten. The fact that Elven horses were brought to Middle-earth by Fëanor was probably not generally known. The Gondorian scholars therefore quite possibly simply deferred to Rohirrim in many matters relating to horses.

If one agrees that Snowmane was not one of the mearas, the question still remains: where are the rest of them? My guess is as follows. It is possible that other mearas existed in Rohan or areas known to the Rohirrim, but that they were all as untamable as was Felaróf originally. Only one of the mearas — their chief—would submit to be ridden by the King of the Mark, and then only after some taming. At the time of the War of the Ring, the previous mearmount of the king had died, and Wormtounge had persuaded Theoden, as in much else, that he was too old to try and break a new one. If this is true, it helps explain why Shadowfax finally submitted to Gandalf instead. It also would mean that Shadowfax was a relatively young mear at the time of the war.

CREATING DETAILED HORSES FOR YOUR GAME

STATS FOR HORSES

Players may wish to use the following stats (a variation of the standard MERP rules) to develop detailed attributes for their characters' horses. The most important detail you should add to your character's horse however, should be a name. I suggest a -10 penalty for riding a horse without a name or any unfamiliar animal. (Yes, I was tempted here to make a pun involving the old song, but resisted.)

Strength: Affects the carrying capacity of the horse and its offensive striking bonus.

Quickness: Affects the speed of the horse.

Agility: Affects the horse's "surefootedness," defensive bonus and jumping ability.

Constitution: Affects the horse's endurance and the number of its concussion hits.

Intelligence: Affects the ability of the horse to learn and perform complex tasks and commands.

Presence: Affects the willingness of the horse to perform actions to which it would be instinctively fearful, such as jumping off cliffs or through fire.

NOTES+ +:

1. Use the standard MERP stat bonuses.
2. Strength bonuses may be used to negate weight penalties as normal.
3. Calculate the speed of the animal as follows:

· Base speed of animal plus the quickness bonus times the pace.

Paces: FAST, VERY FAST, EXTREME WALK, TROT, CANTER, GALLOP, GALLOP, GALLOP, GALLOP

Base: xl x2 x3 x4 x5 x6 x7

Exhaustion Points: 12/hour, 1/min, 3/min, 6/min, 12/min, 10/rnd, 25/rnd, 2/rnd. Exhaustion points (EP) = Constitution stat. (See Section 7.23 of Character Law for the original rules.) Once the animal has used up its EP, it is -100 to all activities. EP may be recovered at one per round of rest. For the rest of the day, however, the animal's EP are reduced by 25. If exhausted again, reduce the EP another 25 and so forth until it reaches zero.

Extreme Gallop may be used only one period per day, and then only if the animal is whipped or spurred (good riders know that this need not be harshly done). Errych with an intelligence above 90 may reach Extreme Gallop speeds without such goading.

[GM Note: Don't let your players get away with using up 99% of their horses' EP and then resting so as not to accrue the penalties. If they try this, give them the full penalty or whatever percentage you feel is appropriate.]

BREED BONUSES

The following statistics are concerned only with the typical riding animal listed and do not apply to draft animals of any type, although some of the ponies mentioned could do double duty as pack animals if needed. There are both lighter and heavier breeds of all the animals presented as well as different color variations. For example, I believe that in a world with three different types of Hobbits, there are probably at least three different types of Hobbit-ponies. Our world has literally hundreds of different horse and pony breeds, and I encourage readers to develop their own specific strains to fit their characters' needs. If a plausible reason is given for desiring a specific type of animal, you can bet that animal-breeders would have tried to develop a strain to meet that desire if possible.

HORSES*

Breed	**St**	**Q"**	**Ag**	**Co**	**It**	**Pr**	**Weight**
Errych**	+ 10	+ 15	+10	+10	10	+ 15	1100 lbs
Pererrych (Númenórean)	+5	+ 10	+5	+ 10	+ 10	+ 10	1200 lbs
Pererrych (Rohirric)	+5	+ 10	+5	+5	+5	+5	1100 lbs
Pererrych Belfalathren)	+ 10	+5	+0	+5	+5	+0	1400 lbs
Pererrych (Haradic)	+0	+ 10	+5	+0	+0	+0	1000 lbs
Rych (Easterling)	+0	+5	+0	+5	+0	+0	900 lbs
Rych (Eriadorian)	+5	-5	+0	+5	+0	-5	1100 lbs

* Base Movement Rate: 60'/rnd.

** First and early Second Age errych have a minimum of 75 for all stats, drops to 65 by the mid-Second Age, and 50 by the late Third Age.

PONIES*

Breed	**St**	**Qu**	**Ag**	**Co**	**It**	**Pr**	**Weight**
Hobbitish	+5	-5	+ 10	+5	+5	-5	500 lbs
Dwarven	+ 15	-15	+ 10	+10	+0	-10	700 lbs
Eriadorian	+ 10	-10	+5	+ 10	+0	-5	600 lbs
Rhovanic	+ 10	-10	+10	+5	+5	-5	650 lbs
Mule/hinny**	+5	-5	+ 15	+5	-5	-15	850 lbs
Donkey***	+0	-20	+20	+5	-15	-25	600 lbs

°Base Movement Rate: 50'/rnd. Pound for pound, ponies are stronger than horses, but generally can carry less due to their smaller size. Despite their high Agility, ponies, mules and donkeys have a -25 penalty to jumping. ** Base Movement 50'/rnd. May not perform Extreme Gallop.

***Base movement 40'/rnd. May only achieve Walk and Gallop speeds.

DISEASES AND AILMENTS FROM EXHAUSTION OR INJURY

The following is a list of problems a gamemaster may wish to inflict on a player's horse depending on circumstances (e.g., the player fails a maneuver role or runs the horse past its exhaustion). All hoof and leg problems listed will make the horse lame unless it is a very minor case.

Broken Leg: Most serious unless magical healing is available; requires euthanasia.

Bowed Tendon: Caused by severe strain or sprain.

Capped Elbow (Shoe Boil): Caused by shoe on hind hoof bumping against the knee on front leg.

Capped Hock: A large swelling on hock joint (back of knee) caused by physical impact.

Cracked Heels (Mud Fever): Skin on pastern (just above the back of the hoof) splits open and discharges pus.

Curb: Strain of tendons in hind legs, caused by breaking into a run too quickly from a standstill.

Fistula: Open boil caused by friction or too much pressure.

Galls: Saddle sores, caused by friction of ill-fitting gear.

Heaves (Broken Wind): Deteriorated lung pockets, caused by running a horse past its endurance.

Founder (Laminitis): Inflammation inside of hoof (usually of front legs). Hooves will be hot to the touch. Caused by overwork when out of condition, standing when hot, running on hard surface and even over-eating.

Lameness: Can be caused by cuts or bruises on legs. Horse must be led until healed.

Ring Bone: Calcium deposit forms around the hoof, caused by physical impact. No cure.

Sidebones: Like Ring Bone except on side of lower hooves. Caused by overwork.

Sit Fasts: Calcified lumps on spine caused by poorly fitting saddles. Pad the areas!

Spavin (Bog Spavin): Blood filled pocket on hock. Use cold compress.

Bone Spavin: Bone deposit on hock.

Splint: Injury to cannon (lower leg) bone, usually in front legs of young horse. Caused by stress before bone has fully hardened. Stocking Up: Swelling of legs during rest. Caused by overwork. Avoid by walking horse before and after work.

Thrown or Loose Shoe: Continued riding requires attention of someone with farrier skills. The great majority of horses in northwestern Middle-earth will be shod. The farther into uncivilized areas one ventures, the more uncommon it will become.

DISEASES AND AILMENTS FROM POOR FOOD OR ENVIRONMENT

The following list enumerates potential problems resulting from neglect of a horse's care — poor stable conditions, poor feeding, indiscriminate grazing. I'm not suggesting that each player become an expert in equine care (I consider that part of a character's riding skill bonus), but simply that players pay attention to what their horse may be doing when they are not riding it.

Colic (Flatulent): Gas in belly or food fermenting in bowels causing unpleasant results.

Colic (Spasmodic): Twisting of the intestine. Can be caused by bad feed or watering after feeding. Often must be surgically corrected. Pressure of internal gases can stop the heart.

Constipation: Caused by worms or watering right after feeding.

Diarrhea: Caused by eating too much green grass or by worms.

Encephalitis (Sleeping Sickness): Carried by mosquitoes.

Flu: Viral infection, can lead to Heaves or Strangles.

Glanders: Contagious bacterial infection causing abscesses in nostrils and jaw groove. Can be transmitted to Men.

Lockjaw (Tetanus): Bacterial infection of wound that leads to paralysis.

Mange: Skin parasite.

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis): Insect-borne bacterial infection causing redness in eyes and making animal sensitive to bright light.

Pneumonia: Usually a viral lung infection (but you knew that).

Poisoning: Either by eating poison plants or bad feed. Can lead to spasmodic colic. (Unfortunately horses cannot vomit.)

Ring Worm: Fungal infection of skin. Treated with ointments.

Roaring (Broken Wind): Atrophy of windpipe, often follows strangles.

Strangles: Gland in horse's jaw becomes infected after pneumonia. If gland doesn't open or drain it may require lancing.

Thrush: Fungal infection of frog (V-shaped area on underside of hoof) caused by keeping horse in wet dirty stall.

Warbles: Skin parasite.

Whistlers: Like roaring but horse makes whistling sound when breathing.

Worms: Intestinal parasites. Often noticeable in feces.

VICES (WHAT A BARGAIN— AND ITS TEETH LOOK GOOD!)

Here is a list of possible behavioral problems (know as "vices") that a horse may have. There is a 5-10% chance, depending on who the seller is, that an animal will have one or more of these vices which can usually be corrected by proper training. Hopefully for the player he or she will not discover the vice at an inopportune time.

Barn Rat: Horse won't ride unless it has another horse for company.

Biter: When ears go down beware!

Bolter: Horse has a tendency to run away out of control even with rider.

Bolting food: Eats too fast. Can lead to colic.

Bores on bit: Lets horse ignore bit control. Often leads to bolting.

Bucking: Usually occurs when horse is cold, but may simply mean the horse doesn't like you.

Charging: Horse has a habit of trying to knock people down.

Cribbing: Eating the wood fence etc. Horse may have nutritional deficiency or may simply be bored.

Crowding: Horse tries to pin person against a wall, then leans on them.

Crowding under saddle: As above, but done while rider is mounted.

Eating while bitted: Horse stops and tries to graze during ride.

Kicking while riding: Either at rider or others.

Kicking in stall: May either not like the person or may not like neighboring horse.

Refuses to be lead on foot: Improperly trained.

Rearing: Raises on hind hooves and kicks the air or person with front hooves.

Shying: Horse tenses, then jumps sideways. Some horses have phobias (snakes, rats, places, etc.) caused by something that may have frightened them in the past.

QUICK HORSE FACTS EVERY RIDER IN MIDDLE-EARTH SHOULD KNOW

Average Natural Lifespan: 20-25 years, but a rare few can live twice that. The world record is 62. Mearas have the same lifespan as Men (i.e. 70 years or so).

Average Gestation Period: 345 days. Foals usually will be on their feet in about an hour and wean at about nine months.

Age at Maturity: Typically horses reach full size at about 3 years although they can be ridden at about 2 years of age. Riding at a younger age may damage legs and hooves. (See Splint.)

Age at Sexual Maturity: It's possible for a mare to conceive at 3 years, but horses are not considered sexually mature until about 5 years.

Feed Requirements: Working horses (includes those being ridden) require about 1-1Π lbs of grain (oats, bran or cracked barley)/100 lbs of weight/day to maintain their strength in addition to what they eat while grazing. After five days without grain, begin subtracting 1 point from the animal's temporary Strength and Constitution stats/day. If no pasture is available, the animal must be fed approximately the same amount of hay. This will make travel through snow-covered or desert wilderness much more difficult, since hay must be carried along with you.

Senses: Horses can both hear and smell much better than Men. They also have superior night vision. (It's also possible that Elven horses and mearas have Elven or at least Dwarven vision.)

POSTSCRIPT

One piece of information that was brought to my attention since this article was written was an article in Beyond Bree,25 which reminded me that a reader once questioned Tolkien about the issue of a bit and bridle on Glorfindel's horse (Letters #211). Tolkien changed "bit and bridle" to "headpiece" in later editions, but the stirrups (mentioned a few pages later) remained. Whether this was intentional or an oversight we will never know.

Nevertheless, since the stirrups do remain in the book, they must be addressed somehow, and I believe my explanation to be the best resolution of the contradiction. Who knows? Perhaps if I had had the opportunity to write Tolkien he would have agreed!

FOOTNOTES

All books by J.R.R. Tolkien refer to Houghton Mifflin editions: hardback editions for *The Hobbit* (Hob) *Morgoth's Ring* (MR) and *Peoples of Middle-earth* (PoMe) and trade-paperback editions for *The Lord of the Rings* (LotR) and *Unfinished Tales* (UT).

1. I am referring here not to the overt actions of Melkor (such as causing dissension among the Noldor or killing the Two Trees, the effects of which were anything but small), but rather the dissemination of Melkor's essence into all matter as described in MR: 400.

UT: 169.

UT: 170, 278 note 7.

It is the generally accepted view today among historians, archaeologists and anthropologists that pastoral economies arose as an epiphenomenon of sedentary agriculture, rather than the reverse [Editor's Note].

Although Tolkien does not state anywhere that the Northmen of Rhovanion participated in the War, I find it likely given the near universal scope of that conflict. Such participation would also have laid a foundation for the close relationship between Ehwathrumi and Gondor in later centuries.

UT: 213 note 3.

LotR I: 275.

This possibility is mentioned in current ICE modules (though it is I understand a compromise).

9. PoMe: 303.

UT: 235.

The retrojection of the Beornings into pre-late Third Age history is also an innovation of the MERP series. In *The Hobbit,* the Beornings emerge as a new and distinct group only after the Battle of Five Armies (Hob: 248); these, moreover, are probably to be identified with the Woodmen (in LotR, "Men of the Vales of Anduin"). However, the allusive hints about Beorn's own origin do not preclude the interpretation which the MERP series has developed. Bernie, following the nomenclature of earlier modules, had adopted the designation "Beijabar" for this invented group; that name, however, has subsequently been corrected in more recent modules to "Berninga" (the Gothic equivalent to Anglo-Saxon "Beornings"). For simplicity's sake, I have altered all of Bernie's references to read "Beorning" [Editor's Note].

Perhaps servants is not strong enough a word, for some treated their animals almost as children.

Hob: 128.

LotR III: 51.

LotR III: 60. Also Karen Wynn Fonstad in her Atlas of Middle-earth has calculated an average speed of 6.7 MPH for the horses of Rohan and 7.0 for the horses of the Rangers (p. 156, 2nd edition).

Atlas of Middle-earth p. 159, gives the distance the Rohirrim traveled per day in their approach to Gondor. See UT: 279 note 9 for the speed of a Dúnadan army, and UT: 315 note 36, for the size of the army of Rohan. I also wanted to note that the Rohirric army included "many hundreds of men with spare horses lightly burdened" (LotR III: 76). Although the number of spare horses is not given, it is likely that the Rohirrim used at least one spare horse for each rider in order to ensure they would have fresh mounts when entering battle.

LotR II: 42.

LotR I: 223.

LotR II: 146.

LotR III: 346.

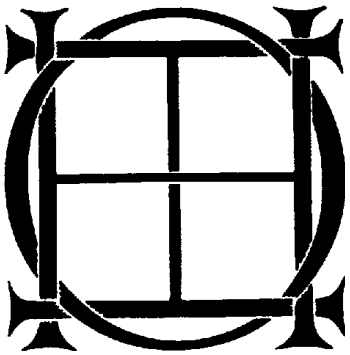
LotR II: 38, 108.

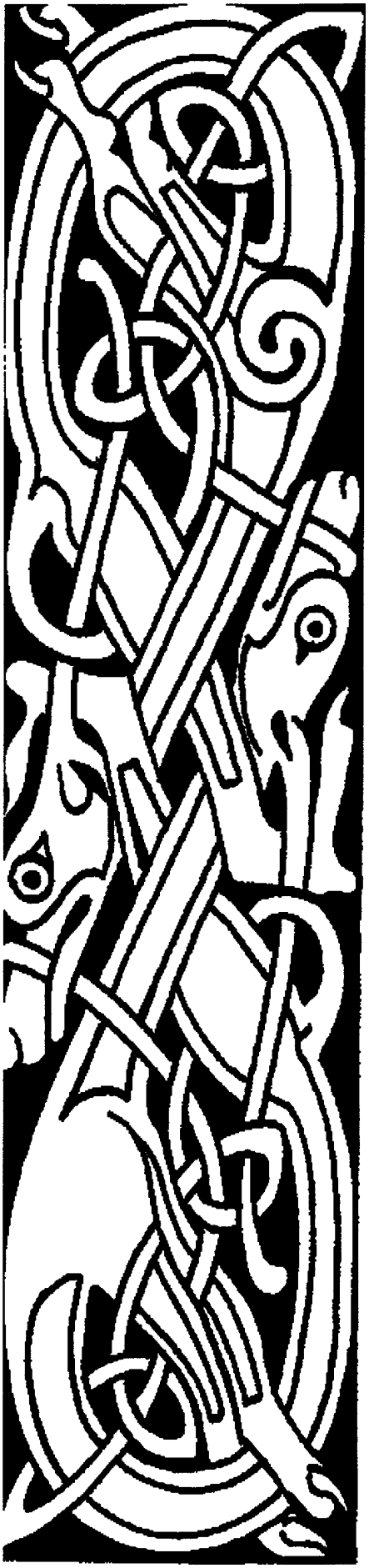
UT311.

LotR III: 414.

LotR II: 202. Even Glorfindel's horse failed this at the Ford of Bruinen.

Robert Acker and Nancy Martsch "Differences Between the Ace and Ballantine editions of *The Lord of the Rings*" (Sept. '96).





Rastarin's Log

Bridget Buxton: Balibogach, Balimur Swamps, Lebennin, SG3 ME1
(nequ36a@prodigy.com)

"Today a most peculiar thing happened. Daeron kept our appointed meeting at Nemarros Bay on the western side of Tolfalas, and I was just informing him of our arrangements for the island's defence, when who should show up but my old friend Rastarin, the dread captain of the Calm Before the Storm (or TCBS, as she is affectionately called—the ship that is; I fear that most of Rastarin's nicknames are unrepeatable). Needless to say, the two were rather shocked to meet each other: what with Daeron being the king's steward and all, and Rastarin Gondor's most wanted smuggler. But the odd thing was the way Daeron stared at her, almost as if he recognised her from somewhere —and I could tell he made her uncomfortable, even though she wasn't letting anything on.

Anyway, Rastarin said she'd deliver word about our capture of Tolfalas to King Tarondor herself—ours not to reason why! Stranger still, I noticed that when Rastarin thought we were out of sight, she cut a bough from the Oiolairë tree that is sacred to Uinen. Now, I'm not a superstitious man as sailors go, but everyone knows that only descendants of the princely lines of Morthond and Belfalas may take one of these 'boughs of return' without suffering certain death. Rastarin's up to something, that's clear—and I'd give my right hand to know what it is!"

Captain Dunsul, Tolfalas, Nórui 23rd

CHAPTER ONE:
THAT BOY IS OUR LAST HOPE!

It is the evening of 26th Nórui in Pelargir, and Rastarin holds forth on the bow of TCBS (presently disguised with false bulwarks as the coastal trader 'Gypsy'). "In my right hand I hold the secret of scrumpy, and in my left, a bough of the Oiolairë tree, the proof of my descent from Prince Thorondor of Morthond and the line of Gondor. Tomorrow I shall leave for Minas Anor to reclaim my birthright and offer my services to the king in the war against Sangahyandion. I know I've never taken sides in this sort of thing before, but times have changed: Sangahyandion has allied with our worst enemy, Captain Hardon of the Pirates of the Red Cliffs; if he wins, the scrumpy business is doomed. I therefore believe that helping King Tarondor is our only hope! But decide now, my trusty crew: will you remain loyal to me if I pledge my services to Gondor, or shall I pass the secret of scrumpy on to a new leader?"

Her crew shout their approval, the helmsman Caldir demonstrating his loyalty by seizing the scrumpy scroll and eating it. So far so good; but will King Tarondor be so easily convinced of the Dread Pirate Rastarin's new allegiance? Rastarin wonders how her siblings in Morthond will react when they discover that their long lost sister, Waldarin, has become the purveyor par excellence of the most noxious intoxicant in Gondor. The last time she saw her twin brother Kalin was when she was ten years old, and Daeron had been escorting them to the Elves of Edhellond, before pirates had parted their ways. "I wonder how HE has turned out after all these years," she mutters, sharpening her cutlass.

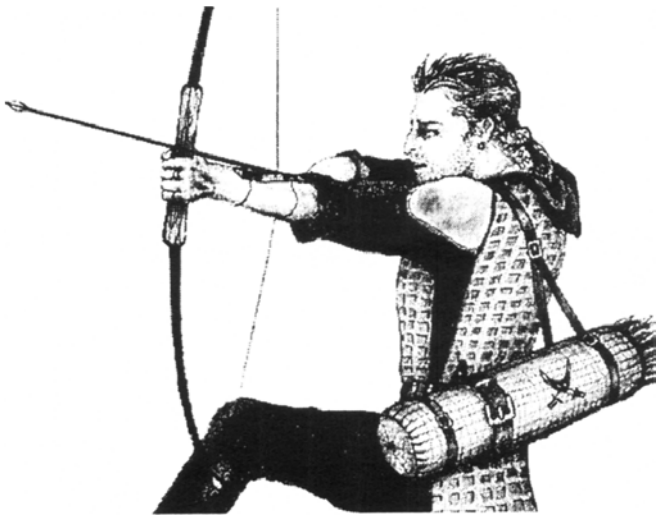
Meanwhile, in another part of Pelargir, Rastarin's brother Kalin is becoming acquainted with one Rassimus, son of Urranta, leader of the Shipwright's Guild. Kalin is singing tales of his wonderful life at Edhellond, where his secret love for the Elven maiden Laurelin provided inspiration for many songs of courtly love and chivalry. "I'd like to teach the world to sing!" Kalin enthuses. "But first I shall offer my sword to King Tarondor, that I might perform some manly deed in the war against Sangahyandion, an act of heroism worthy of my exalted Dúnadan blood, which bestows upon me a grace and nobility that you unfortunately can never share, Rassimus."

"My father has sent me to Minas Anor also," says Rassimus. "We must persuade the king to put more resources into the defence of Pelargir, or it will never hold when Sangahyandion comes. Only Tarondor can requisition the timber we need to build more ships." The two decide to travel together, and take a room at the Frothing Hog, the best beer in Pelargir (or used to be). But their sleep is not peaceful, for Kalin is disturbed by a strange dream of a woman being attacked.

Lytta, a scarf wrapped securely around her forehead to hide the moon crescent mark of her Oathbreaker heritage, creeps silently along the darkened cobblestones, unsure of her way in a city as large and overwhelming as Pelargir. The journey from her village had been long and perilous, made more difficult by the terrible responsibility she bore as spirit-namer of the Ruadh clan. Her people were counting on her to find help against the Brotherhood of the Mountain Path, a strange death cult that sought their destruction. Prince Arador of Morthond had been no help, and there was no one else to turn to: Arador's parents and elder sister Aranwen had died in the Plague four years earlier, and his brother Kalin had gone to the Elves. Only the king, Lytta felt, could help them in their present troubles. She just wished she'd had more time to prepare her case, and to prepare for the world in general. But these thoughts slip away as movement in the darkness catches her eye. Turning, she perceives four or five lean shapes, bare skin gleaming wetly in the moonlight. The Brotherhood of the Mountain Path!

Cursing the unfairness of her position, Lytta does the only thing she can, and runs. Finding herself facing a dead-end alley, she pulls out her weapon: a small dagger attached to a five foot chain. Looping the chain around her arm, she holds up the dagger to make sure the contact poison still adheres to the blade. Satisfied, she looks up the alleyway at the advancing men and smiles. "I'm not afraid to die, are you?"

Kalin wakes from a troubled sleep, visions of a strangely dressed woman tumbling through his mind. "Rassimus, wake up! There's someone out there—a woman. In trouble. We have to help her! Hurry!" Seizing clothes and weapons, Kalin leaps heroically from the window. Struggling down to the street as fast as he can on his crippled leg, Rassimus nearly runs into Kalin's back in the darkness. "Which way?"



He looks around expectantly, as Kalin motions him to silence. He is about to speak when Lytta's battle cry cuts through the night.

"I'll show you the true meaning of death, you spineless bastards!"

Kalin looks to Rassimus. "I'd guess that answers your question."

Running round the side of the Frothing Hog, the two men behold a strange sight. Half a dozen men in Daen-style leggings surround a lone female figure.

Strange flowing sigils adorn their bared chests. "It's all right, my lady! I shall save you!" cries Kalin, and leaps into the fray. Rassimus follows, and soon they are joined by two other allies: passers-by who hear their shouts.

Indeed, these are none other than Rastarin and her trusty first mate, Clennan of Lossarnach. Both are old friends of Rassimus'. But as they are finishing off the last few Brotherhood scum, Kalin inadvertently reveals his identity, prompting Rastarin to make her excuses to Rassimus, grab Clennan and slip off into the darkness before they can be introduced. Which is just as well, for at that moment Daeron shows up at the head of the city guard, and demands to know what is going on.

Lytta, meanwhile, has lost interest in the men's conversation, and ignoring their puzzled glances she begins to search among the corpses. "This one will do." She sits beside one of the dead men and begins to mumble under her breath, a strange chant that Kalin has never heard. "What do you do, Lady?" he asks. "I send a message to my enemy." Her chant becomes an eerie song, and Rassimus begins mumbling about witchcraft.

"This is some sort of sorcery or Black Magic," says Kalin. "I will have nothing to do with such practices!" But Daeron silences him with a gesture.

"Wait and watch. Perhaps you will learn something." As they watch, Lytta suddenly seizes up, screaming and writhing, yet in a moment she becomes still and begins to speak tonelessly to the empty air. "Go back to your master and tell him that we are aware of his presence. Anymore he sends against me will return in far worse state than this." With that she slumps forward, exhausted.

Daeron nods. "She is a spirit-namer of the Oathbreakers, Kalin. Such people have the power to capture the spirits of the newly dead and communicate with them before they depart this world." Kalin continues to regard Lytta warily as she introduces herself and explains her mission to Daeron. But chivalry overcomes squeamishness, and he and Rassimus offer Lytta their protection for the rest of the journey to Minas Anor, which she accepts gladly. As Daeron departs and the rest return to the Frothing Hog, Kalin curses his misfortune for missing the opportunity to meet the legendary Rastarin.

In Minas Anor, Kalin and his friends are given a tour by Daeron. The city is revelling in festivities, for Tarondor has performed his kingly duty and returned to the citadel with a new sapling of the White Tree. Minas Anor is to be the new capital of Gondor, people say, and although many in the city welcome the news, others are uneasy. Rumours of Sangahyandion's successes in Harondor are on everyone's lips, and some openly wonder whether the new king can command the loyalty and resources needed to halt his advance. The other news is written on posters all around the city: "Wanted, Dead or Alive: Rastarin, pirate captain of the Calm Before the Storm. Reward: 20,000 mina."

"20,000 mina!" gasps Clennan. "I could retire on that."

Rastarin, muffled in a heavy cloak, rips the poster off the wall of the Eagle and Child in anger. "Damn hypocrites," she growls. "Half the nobles in this city drink scrumpy whenever they can get it."

"Rwwark! The Dread Pirate Rastarin! The Dread Pirate Rastarin! Come and get it!" croaks a harsh voice from the folds of Clennan's tunic.

"Why do you have to bring that damn parrot with you wherever we go, Clennan?

You'll get us both killed," Rastarin complains. "Hey, isn't that Rassimus?" The two pirates run out to meet their friend, who is taking an afternoon stroll through the city in search of beer. Rassimus reveals that he, Kalin, and the spirit-namer woman have an audience with Tarondor the following morning, and Rastarin is suddenly struck with an idea of how she could get in to see the king. "Rassimus, my friend, how would you like to make 20,000 mina?"

Abandoning Lytta to the delights of the herb gardens of the citadel, Kalin visits the aged Lady Mordulin, the sister of his infamous uncle Prince Orodreth. There he speaks of a vision that has long been troubling him. In it he sees the great statue of Isildur with a white gem upon its brow, the famous Elendilmir, and as he watches the stone begins to glow with a blinding light. Then he is running through a many-pillared hall towards a glimmering well, when suddenly a huge wave of water sweeps in upon him, and all is destroyed. Mordulin is unable to explain the vision, for the Elendilmir (so it is said) was lost long ago when Isildur was slain by Orcs near the Anduin.

But the hall, she suggests, might be within the Halls of the Faithful at Pelargir, the ancient library that lies under the city's enclosed harbour. Kalin thanks his aunt and takes his leave, but Mordulin stops him at the door. "Kalin, there is something else you should know. The king is calling a war council tomorrow afternoon, and many important lords and captains from all over Gondor will attend. Your brother Arador, however, has declined to come, and some say that his loyalty to the king is in question. I cannot say what the truth of this matter is, but tomorrow you must do your best to uphold the honour of our family in Arador's stead."

The next morning, Kalin, Rassimus, Lytta and a cloaked figure are hustled into Tarondor's audience chamber over the objections of Daeron, who also attends. The king listens with interest to their various appeals, but is evasive when it comes to committing himself to any immediate action. "But who is this dark figure who accompanies you, Rassimus?" he asks at last.

Taking her cue, Rastarin sweeps back her cloak and bows with a flourish.

"This is, ah, Rastarin—the pirate Rastarin," says Rassimus nervously.

"Say you've handed me in for the reward, you idiot," she whispers to him.

Tarondor is shocked. "Are you truly the Dread Pirate Rastarin?"

"Do you find me dread, my Lord?" Rastarin smiles. "Since Rassimus here seems reluctant to claim the price on my head, I claim it for myself. And I also present you with this: a bough of the Oiolairë tree, a token of my true identity. For I am Waldarin of Morthond, daughter of Thorondor, and this amulet I bear of the Gwaedhel-sword is an heirloom of my house." There are gasps of recognition all round, as Waldarin is joyfully reunited with her twin brother. "I can't believe that my sister is the infamous Pirate Rastarin!" he exclaims. "I was as shocked as you are, Kalin, when I discovered that you were a minstrel!" she replies, somewhat less enthusiastically.

After Rastarin explains herself and her desire to serve Gondor against Sangahyandion, Tarondor agrees to overlook the whole scrumpy issue (at least for the present) and provide her with a letter of marque. In return for her services, Rastarin asks if she might be given the secret of making naurnen, the explosive liquid fire that water cannot quench. Tarondor agrees, although the secret, he says, is held only by the Lord Captain of Pelargir.

"Lytta and I shall be passing through Pelargir before I return to Morthond to enquire into the grievances of the Ruadh clan against this 'Brotherhood'...and my brother," says Kalin. "So we shall accompany you, and Rassimus."

"A celebration is in order," says Rastarin as they leave the king.

"Daeron, will you not accompany us to the Eagle and Child for a taste of my finest scrumpy?" The steward is taken aback. "I don't think I should stoop to drinking such beverages, Captain." Kalin agrees, and adds, "It wouldn't be fitting for one of my august rank to imbibe of such pig swill."

A couple of hours later, they are all back in Rastarin's room and merrily drunk.

"I'll tell you what it means to be the King's Steward," says Daeron, holding up his glass of scrumpy unsteadily. "I do all the work, all the time, with no recognition, and once a year the king climbs up the mountain, speaks the Divine Name, comes back with a potted plant and throws a big party. And that's what it means to be the King's Steward. Oh, how weary I am of life!"

"By the Valar, this is fine stuff!" exclaims Kalin. "But it's not like anything I've ever tasted before. Why, sister, is it so frowned upon in civilized circles?"

"Because of the side effects," Rastarin replies. "Overindulgence in scrumpy has been known to cause paranoia, delusions of grandeur, sometimes even hallucinations if you're lucky!"

Which is exactly what Kalin and Rastarin experience later that night, when they are visited by the ghostly figure of Ygana the Prophetess of Morthec, King of the Dead. Ygana warns Kalin of a great secret about to be lost, and he experiences again the vision of the Halls of the Faithful being drowned in water. "You must go to Pelargir with all speed, and find out the secret of who you are..." she says, as her spirit form dissipates.

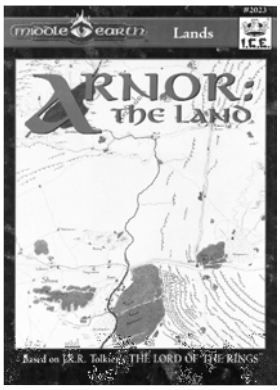
Product Review

Wesley J. Frank

Arnor: The Land

(#2022) Charlottesville, Virginia Iron Crown Enterprises, 1997

[232pp; $30.00]



After the recently published *Arnor: The People* volume, the much awaited *Arnor: The Land* marks the completion of the third printing of the material on Eriador, most of which was already seen in the excellent but now out of print Arnor realm module. The new edition constitutes of 195 pages of text, covering geography, flora and fauna, many interesting sites and towns and cities with detailed layouts of the more important ones, all for use with nine adventures. In the third appendix, four black and white maps show the locations of the realms and peoples in the critical periods of Eriador's history, while two additional maps show the most important places in Arthedain and the Shire. 29 pages of tables, stats are given for all of the NPCs appearing in the text. In addition to these stats is a weather table which provides detailed guidelines for daily determination of temperature, precipitation and clouds, as well as some specific climatic occurrences in various regions of the land.

The most prominent feature of this book are four overlapping maps of Eriador, showing all the lands between Ered Luin and Hithaeglir (in addition to Lórien, Fangorn and Wold), and between Forochel and Enedhwaith. Thus, the whole map of the three sister kingdoms and the neighboring areas is finally available. These maps, another exquisite work by Pete Fenlon, are made in such a manner that nothing is lost on the overlapping points, and even Tharbad, Bree or Amon Sûl are shown adequately on at least one of the 4 large pieces of the map. Thus, they can all be fitted together to form an impeccable map of Eriador, or used independently.

The book itself begins with a description of the geography and climate of the region; information on flora and fauna is given in relation to these, while the elaborate descriptions of many herbs, curatives, poisons and all kinds of animals are presented in the first two appendices at the end of the book. The Banes of Angmar (curses and diseases devised by the Witch-king and his minions) provide an essential spice to any campaign set during the days of the might of Angmar and in the dark years that followed the demise of Arthedain.

A "Traveler's Guide to Arnor" offers the information useful for most of the regular gaming sessions in these areas. Lots of entries give hints for possible adventures in the most interesting regions, towns and sites. It is easy to develop any of these hints into a fulfilling, low-level adventure for beginning players, while more complex plots allow the gamemaster to expand on them and build a campaign equal in depth to those which are already given in this volume. Many entries, given in alphabetical order, can also be used when browsing the color map.

The important cities and towns described in the following chapters, whose layouts are shown in the color inserts, are Annúminas, Cameth Brin (a perspectival rendition of the fort and the barracks of Tanoth Brin, a map of the surrounding region and the map of village Talugdaeri, but no inner layouts of the fort itself) and Fornost Erain; Metraith, Rood and Sudúri are described and shown on black and white maps, while the city of Tharbad is given a general description, with layouts of the sewers, but no map. This is probably due to the fact that a Tharbad citadel module is still in preparation.

Three Cardolanian castles are given detailed descriptions and layouts as examples of Dúnadan architecture. On the color inserts, the pictures of a frontier citadel of Arthedain and of an Arthadan observatory are provided (with detailed layouts given in the book). Further sites of interest depicted in detail are the Barrow-downs, Lond Daer Enedh (with layouts of both Vinyalondë and Lond Daer in the Second Age, as well as the maps of their Third Age ruins), the caves of Creb Durga and the royal library of Annúminas. The fort of Bar-e-Dongorath can be used as a typical frontier keep of Arthedain. Most of the challenging Third Age adventures given in this book use these layouts for settings, while the intriguing scenario titled "The Banners of the High King" is a great opportunity for a Second Age campaign in the time of the Last Alliance.

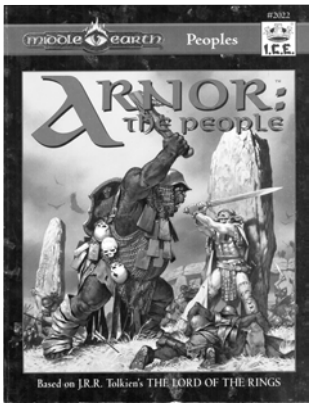
There are no major critiques to the material presented in this book. The imagination of the author of this work is shown at its best. Many of the unnatural beings, places and occurrences described in this book could have easily lost touch with the spirit of Tolkien, but Wesley J. Frank and other contributors deserve compliments for enriching the world of *Middle-earth Role Playing* without compromising the adequate loyalty to the works of Tolkien. A lesser criticism concerns the choice of the presented adventures: all of them are centered in Cardolan and Arthedain, and not a single one in Rhudaur. Maybe one of the adventures in Cameth Brin, from the out of print Hillmen of the Trollshaws module, could have been included as well, or instead of one of these adventures, to give Rhudaur equal treatment.

The greatest virtue of this enterprise is the fact that it offers excellent role playing material to those who have missed the original edition of Arnor.

Even so, ICE did not restrict itself merely to the reprinting of the old material, but has instead offered us a better organ-

ized whole, split in two volumes, and presented us with a wonderful set of maps. Arnor: The Land concretizes the general overview information from Arnor: The People with all the details necessary for day-to-day adventuring in the realms of Eriador. This volume shows that ICE constantly strives to improve its MERP line, and all of those who worked on the creation of this excellent volume deserve our compliments.

Reviewer: Jasna Martinovic



Wesley J. Frank
***Arnor: The People* (#2022)**
Charlottesville, Virginia: Iron Crown Enterprises, 1996
[232 pages; $22.00]

In Arnor: The People, ICE once again puts out an excellent reference work, bringing forth a richly detailed image of a land well deserving of such careful attention. Author Wesley J. Frank does a fine job of providing information any gamemaster or player would need to promote and affect a grand adventure in the traditional Tolkien style. A great deal of effort and work obviously went into the stunningly detailed setting, along with a fantastic use of Tolkien's invented languages alongside real-world tongues—well-blended and neatly explained. Even a novice simply interested in Tolkien's works could find enjoyment in this work.

One of the book's strongest areas lies in its well thought-out tables and reference charts. Nearly every section includes some table or graph which simplifies crucial but otherwise complex information (prices, trade conversions, language modifiers, etc). Of particular note are the graphs explaining social interaction between peoples of varying lands and the wonderful military tables in the appendices. Also of note are the detailed descriptions for various prominent figures of Eriador.

The internal maps are also well-detailed and laid out, while character portraits help bring to life many nobles and important persons described throughout this work. The only concern one might find is in the need to place the maps and the lands they depict in a greater perspective. For this, a world map would be most helpful, especially for a novice player.

The book's coverage of military concerns is exceptionally well-detailed. Nearly every section on different peoples of Eriador describes how war affects their lives and loyalties. The module also offers an excellent survey of the royal armies of Arthedain, Cardolan and Rhudaur. Following directly on this theme, the book offers a grand portrait of the nobility of these three realms. NPC descriptions and detailed family trees make this information easily adaptable to any campaign.

The only thing presenting a problem to the reader is in fact this very detail. While a gamemaster or veteran player will revel in the complexities of the Tolkien world, novices may find themselves overwhelmed before they even begin. It should also be noted that while the work itself is a worthwhile read, a novice should be aware that will require additional materials to completely understand and utilize the game system described. In spite of this, though, *Arnor: The People* should thoroughly delight the gamemaster, satisfy the player and intrigue the novice.

Reviewer: Gen Larson

Middle-earth: Dark Minions
Charlottesville, Virginia: Iron Crown Enterprises, 1996.

Middle-earth: Dark Minions (MEDM) is the second expansion set for the Middle-earth Collectible Card Game. Like its predecessor, *The Dragons*, MEDM offers 180 new cards with new possibilities of action with the dark servants (nice!), though in this case we get a huge batch of rules, additions and modifications with enough complexity to make us study them carefully before putting them into practice — practically turning the insert in each booster pack into a complete rulebook.

The most important novelty in MEDM is, of course, Minions—a new type of card with its own template and color. Minions are used as Agents (cards with the usual Hazard template, representing a character sent in a secret mission by the Dark Lord or by one of his lieutenants), but not all Agents are Minions. (Other uses for Minions will be introduced with the next expansion, *The Lidless Eye* (already in the shops since June).

Minions can do almost all the same things that Characters can do, but (like Hazards) they are mainly played during the movement phase. Their capabilities of moving secretly through regions, attacking parties, influencing or making Hazard creatures playable in places where they would not normally be offer enormous new possibilities for the game. It is easy to see that Minions are really powerful Hazards and therefore a useful tool for stopping our adversaries in their quests. Though their employment may seem complicated at first sight, it is just a matter of time getting used to them; they deserve the effort.

The second strong point of MEDM is the new set of site cards, called the Underdeeps. These represent a group of caves and passages created by Nature, joined by Melkor and used by his most powerful servants as a way of surreptitiously traveling across Middle-earth. A card of this type is identical to any other site card, except that it is not situated in a region but under another site, called the surface site. A list of adjacent deep sites substitutes for the "nearest Haven" rule. So, when traveling underground, a Minion can only go to another Under-deep or its surface site.

Though attractive, Under-deeps are really dangerous places (playable Hazards and movement are harder) and, unless your party is ready to deal with them, the outcome of a visit means usually a loss not worth taking.

The last important feature of the expansion is the concept of Prisoners. Haven't you ever dreamt of taking Thorin and his mates under you custody, just as the Woodelves did in *The Hobbit*? Well, now this is possible with the new Hazard events. When you successfully play one of such card, the prisoner is placed with a site card representing the place from which he must be rescued. The Prisoner's marshaling points are counted as negative, becoming permanent if he is eliminated. Leading a party into the rescue site and defeating all the attacks placed for its defense frees the Prisoner.

As with *The Dragons*, MEDM offers clarifications and additions to the existing rules — always needed with a game of this proportions, and always evoking thanks from its players, fans and collectors. These clarifications concern permanent events, cards aside, manifestations and automatic attacks creatures.

As a final word, I'd like to add that, taking into account that ICE offers again a serious product with great additions and enhancements, MEDM is another hit in the successful life of this great CCG. This is what I call an EXPANSION!

Reviewer: Marco Antonio Blanco Navarrete

Gnomon is the name given to the pointer on a sundial, or the triangular piece that projects from the surface of the dial. It is also the name given to a figure formed by any parallelogram with a corner removed, as pictured here:—

It was used in the Pythagorean school to illustrate the formation of square numbers from the sum of successive odd numbers. Thus, if a square of 3 units be placed next to a square of 4 units, and the corners be completed, the gnomon so formed will contain 7 units, and the whole square will contain 9 + 7 = 16 units. Similarly, if a square of 5 units be placed next to a square of 6 units, the gnomon will contain 11 units, and the whole square will contain 25 + 11 = 36 units. And so on.

Gnomon is also used in Euclid, Book II, to prove certain properties of rectangles. Let ABCD be a rectangle, and let EH be drawn parallel to AB, and FG parallel to AD. Then the rectangle AK + the rectangle EC = the rectangle AG + the rectangle FH. For the gnomon MNO = the rectangle AK + the rectangle EC, and the gnomon PQR = the rectangle AG + the rectangle FH. But the gnomon MNO = the gnomon PQR, since the whole rectangle AC = the whole rectangle EG, and the rectangle AF = the rectangle FC, and the rectangle DK = the rectangle KB. Therefore the rectangle AK + the rectangle EC = the rectangle AG + the rectangle FH.

Gnomonic Projection

—: Used in Astronomy :—